

**INSIDE THE MIND OF ISIS:
UNDERSTANDING ITS GOALS AND IDEOLOGY TO
BETTER PROTECT THE HOMELAND**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
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INSIDE THE MIND OF ISIS: UNDERSTANDING ITS GOALS AND IDEOLOGY TO BETTER PROTECT THE HOMELAND

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2016

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Ron Johnson, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Johnson, Portman, Lankford, Ayotte, Ernst, Sasse, Carper, McCaskill, Tester, Heitkamp, Booker, and Peters.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHNSON

Chairman JOHNSON. This hearing will come to order.

I want to welcome everybody and say good morning. I certainly want to thank the witnesses for taking the time to appear, for taking the time to really write, I think, some very thoughtful and revealing testimony.

I would ask unanimous consent to enter my written opening statement in the record,¹ and Senator Carper is generally pretty good about not objecting.

Senator CARPER. Oh, I will allow it.

Chairman JOHNSON. But, without objection, so ordered.

Let me just explain a little bit. Really, this hearing has been in the works for quite some time, and it was really spawned by somebody who could not be here because of scheduling conflicts of the Committee as well as himself. But Graeme Wood wrote, I thought, a very interesting article published in *The Atlantic* a number of months ago, "Inside the Mind of ISIS." And I would say that it certainly caught this Senator, and I think an awful lot of people, policymakers in Washington, D.C., here, somewhat by surprise. It was pretty revealing. I have talked to enough people that really did not understand the importance of the territorial gains and holdings to create the caliphate and the chain of events which that set up.

So, we started discussions, and although we do not have Mr. Wood here today, we have, I think—he is a reporter. We have the experts that I think he consulted with, in terms of writing his thoughtful article, and so I am really looking forward to the testimony here today.

¹ The prepared statement of Senator Johnson appears in the Appendix on page 41.

I just want to throw out one little statistic, and this comes from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) from the State Department. The START Report, which they initially published in 2012. The progression and the growth of terrorism is stark, and did we ever get to the bottom of the differences in the numbers from 2014? OK. Which should I use? OK, those are even worse.

So from 2012, the number of attacks reported by the State Department in this report was 6,771. In 2014, the number of attacks had grown to 16,800 worldwide. That is 2.5 times the number of attacks just 2 years earlier.

In terms of deaths, in 2012 there were 11,000 individuals killed in terrorist attacks. In 2014, there were 43,500. That is almost a fourfold increase in terrorist attacks.

So the fact of the matter is, the risk, the threat of Islamic terror, from my standpoint, it is real. It is growing, and statistics prove it. And there is no way that we are going to be able to adequately address this unless we fully understand what motivates Islamic terrorists. This hearing is specifically about the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—but I think that we can talk about Islamic terrorists, in general, and explore that—and what is their ultimate goal. And I think that we will hear testimony that we have some contradictory goals as well, which makes it even more confusing in terms of how we deal with the issue.

But, again, I just want to thank my witnesses, and with that I will turn it over to Senator Carper.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARPER

Senator CARPER. Thanks. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. It is great to see all of you today. Thanks for your preparation, thanks for joining us, and for your willingness to testify and to respond to our questions. And I thank the Chairman for calling the hearing.

One of the most important jobs of our government—in fact, State and Federal and local as well—is to make sure that our people are safe. That is what this Committee focuses on.

As the Paris and San Bernardino terror attacks showed us, ISIS and ISIS-inspired attacks remain a major threat in this country. In fact, just last week, ISIS carried out attacks against our allies in Turkey and I believe in Indonesia.

Today, we are going to look at ISIS's ideology and how it hopes to achieve its goals. One of ISIS's key strengths is the large number of recruits that they are able to pull in. And despite the heavy losses inflicted on ISIS by coalition forces in recent months, the number of ISIS fighters on the ground in Iraq and Syria remains pretty much the same thanks to a stream of new recruits flowing into the region on a regular basis.

ISIS also appears to have a significant online army that grows daily, and these "virtual" soldiers may never set foot in the territory that ISIS controls, but they are waging an aggressive social media campaign that calls on people to do the group's bidding from thousands of miles away. These battlefield recruits and online supporters are attracted not only to ISIS's ideology, but to its image as well.

And what is that image? Well, the image that ISIS would like to project is that of a winner. And even as it suffers serious defeats on the battlefield—I think the amount of land they control in Syria and Iraq is down by about 30 percent in recent months and continues to diminish. But even as they suffer serious defeats on the battlefield and lose key leaders, ISIS still attempts to project an image of indestructibility. And they do this through fictitious claims and propaganda on social media, and also by ignoring the truth about the progress that coalition forces are making. This winner message appeals to many young men who crave fame, fortune, love, and increased social standing.

Just as troubling is the fact that ISIS has successfully advanced a twisted narrative that the United States is at war with Islam and that it is the duty of young Muslims to defend their religion by attacking the United States and our allies.

Nothing could be further from the truth. That is not what we are about. We know that, and it is important that we convey that consistently throughout the world.

This battle is not against a religion. This battle is against ISIS, plain and simple. ISIS is a cowardly group of murderers who kill Muslims, kill Jews, and kill Christians alike. They have no regard for human life. The estimated 30,000 ISIS fighters have nothing to do with the 1.5 billion Muslim men and women who peacefully practice their religion around the world and in our communities.

At the end of the day, this battle against ISIS is a war of words and ideas as much as it is a war of military power and action. That is why it is so important that we not only continue to crush ISIS on the battlefield, but also counter their hateful message.

To this end, last month I introduced legislation that would create and authorize an office at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to counter the violent messages of ISIS and other terror groups. I welcome all of my colleagues to join me on this important piece of legislation. We will be talking about it during the course of this hearing further.

This fight against ISIS, however, is not solely the responsibility of the Department of Homeland Security or any single Federal agency. All of us have a role to play, and we have an obligation to say something if we see something suspicious.

And we all, especially those of us in public office, have a responsibility to be mindful of the words we use when we talk about Islam and the 1.5 billion Muslims around the world who practice their religion peacefully. They live in our States. They live in our neighborhoods, and they believe as fervently as we do in the Golden Rule: to treat other people the way that we want to be treated. We need to work to ensure that the rhetoric that we use does not play into the hands of ISIS to be used against us as a weapon.

When we make careless comments about the nature of Islam or the need to keep Muslims out of the United States for political purposes, we feed ISIS's narrative that the United States is at war with Muslims.

We have to be smarter than that. I think we are. Our country is better than that. We do not need to engage in demagoguery or run from our moral obligations in order to keep Americans safe.

Let me close by just saying I look forward to learning more today about ISIS's ideology and tactics as well as what more we can do to address the root causes of this difficult challenge.

With that, welcome and thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Carper.

It is the tradition of this Committee to swear in witnesses, so if you will all rise and raise your right hand. Do you swear that the testimony you will give before this Committee today will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Mr. HAYKEL. I do.

Ms. STERN. I do.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. I do.

Mr. VIDINO. I do.

Chairman JOHNSON. Please be seated.

Our first witness is Dr. Bernard Haykel. Dr. Haykel is the professor of Near Eastern Studies and the Director of the Institute for Transregional Studies of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia at Princeton University. He is a historian of the Arabian Peninsula and a scholar of Islamic law and Islamic political movements. His research is concerned with political and social tensions that arise from questions about religious identity and authority, and he has been described as "the foremost secular authority on the Islamic State's ideology." Dr. Haykel.

TESTIMONY OF BERNARD HAYKEL, D.PHIL.,¹ DIRECTOR, THE INSTITUTE OF TRANSREGIONAL STUDIES, AND PROFESSOR OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Mr. HAYKEL. Thank you very much. It is a privilege and an honor to be here today. I have 5 minutes, so I will be quite telegraphic, and I really have three or four points to make.

The first is that ISIS is a religious movement with set political goals. The principal goal is the empowerment of Sunni Muslims against a long list of enemies. The origins of ISIS lie in a complex set of factors, a very complex context in the Middle East. It involves a religious revival that started in the 1970s. You have a situation where the governments of this region are uniformly authoritarian, brutal, and have each eviscerated the social fabric as well as the civic societies that they dominate.

You have relative economic deprivation. You have a massive youth bulge, with 60 percent of the population under the age of 25. You have bad governance, as I have already mentioned. And you also have several wars.

The most proximate war for ISIS's development is the war in Iraq and the U.S. invasion in 2003. And then some have even attributed climate change as a cause for this kind of radicalization.

Now, this movement is extremely adept, as you have noted, at using social media to propagate its culture of victimization as well as the sanctification of violence. And they argue that violence is the only means to address the weaknesses of Muslims. They target a long list of enemies, principally Shiites, as well as other Sunnis

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Haykel appears in the Appendix on page 44.

who disagree with them, secular people, anyone who believes in democracy, or any of the modern ideologies of our age.

They also have developed a culture, which is a fantasy, of what early Islam was like, which they are trying to reproduce. This is a culture that is extremely rich and taps into a very deep vein in the history of Islamic civilization and in the text of Islamic civilization.

Now, I believe that there is no silver-bullet solution to ISIS. It is a symptom of deep structural problems in the region. Military defeat, while very welcome, would not address the problem of ISIS. And, moreover, the United States does not have the tools nor does the United States have the religious standing to speak authoritatively on what is or is not Islamic.

I believe that ISIS today is, in fact, being defeated militarily. As you noted, they have lost 30 to 40 percent of their territory. But addressing the root causes that produce a phenomenon like ISIS is what is necessary, and this will take a generation to do. And most of the effort actually has to be done by people in the region of the Middle East and by Muslims throughout the world.

I expect that as ISIS loses more and more territory and is defeated by groups like the Kurds or the Iraqi army, which is principally a Shiite-ruled and Shiite-dominated army, ISIS will become more desperate. And with desperation, we will see more lone-wolf and ISIS-directed attacks in the West. It is very important not to overreact to these attacks because it will play into ISIS's narrative.

And I also think that lone-wolf attacks are extremely difficult to stop. We must definitely mobilize our own Muslim community against ISIS's ideology. They are the first and best line of defense against this movement.

I also would like to underscore that ISIS should not be seen as an existential threat. If we speak of it as an existential threat, we also play into its narrative. So the solution, I think, is one that would require patience, but also hard-nosed realism and a strategy of not overreacting to its attacks on us and on others.

Thank you very much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Dr. Haykel.

Our next witness is Dr. Jessica Stern. Dr. Stern is a research professor at Boston University's Pardee School of Global Studies and an Advanced Academic Candidate at the Massachusetts Institute of Psychoanalysis. She was a member of Hoover Institution's Task Force on National Security and Law. She is a Fulbright Scholar and earned a Guggenheim Fellowship for her work on trauma and violence. And, finally, she is an expert on terrorism and co-authored the book "ISIS: The State of Terror," and authored the book "Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill," among other works. Dr. Stern.

TESTIMONY OF JESSICA STERN, PH.D.,¹ RESEARCH PROFESSOR, PARDEE SCHOOL FOR GLOBAL STUDIES, BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Ms. STERN. Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you so much for inviting me here. It is an honor to be here to speak to you about a topic I have been working on since the 1980s.

My dissertation adviser was Ash Carter, and he thought back then that it was weird that I was obsessed with terrorism, Iraq, and chemical weapons. He has admitted in public that he maybe was wrong at the time.

When we think about what ISIS wants, I think there are two different aspects. One is: What does it want collectively? What does the group want? And here we see two contradictory goals. On the one hand, the group wants to run and spread its caliphate, not just in Iraq and Syria but in its so-called wil ayat, or provinces. One of the most important of these provinces is in Libya.

At the same time, ISIS wants to polarize Muslim against Muslim, Muslim against non-Muslim, and goad us into sending ground forces to fight out a final battle in the town of Dabiq.

These are obviously contradictory goals. I believe ISIS will continue to pursue both of those goals—trying to spread the caliphate and also trying to goad us into sending in ground forces to destroy the State.

The second part of the question is: What do individual members think they will get from joining this terrible organization? Well, in the region, as Professor Haykel has been saying, they are looking for security. ISIS is capitalizing on poor governance and the disenfranchisement of Sunnis. Individuals are also seeking power, status, redemption, and the lure of living in what they call the only Sharia-based state, though we have to remember that many people living in ISIS-controlled territory are trapped there. They are not remotely interested in this ideology.

More importantly for us, in terms of our national security, is why Westerners are joining. Here I think that there is a desire to reinvent themselves, reinvent society, and to seek a new and clear identity. Interestingly, the work of Lorenzo Vidino has shown that 40 percent of those who have been arrested are converts. ISIS is a new religion. Everyone who joins it is a convert. But we are also seeing non-Muslims attracted to this way of becoming a hero and having an adventure.

Our military response addresses the problem over there, but obviously it does not address the problem of homegrown recruits. Here we have to think seriously about how to get better at containing ISIS's ideology. I think everyone needs to be involved in this—the private sector and schools, for example. Ignorance about Islam is a vulnerability. Mothers are a key factor in fighting this problem. They imagine their kids are safe when they are inside on the Internet. We see this especially in refugee communities, where moms think, "Great, my son is inside on the Internet. He is safe." We need to teach those moms that this is not true.

¹ The prepared statement of Ms. Stern appears in the Appendix on page 50.

It requires a global effort to find a new way for kids to feel that they can find an identity with dignity and honor.

Finally, I want to say that there is a problem for scholars who want to study the mind of the terrorist. Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) make it very difficult for scholars to ask such questions as: Were you recruited by ISIS? Why did you think about joining? Why did you not join? I cannot ask those questions. If somebody says, "Yes," referring to recruitment or joining, then I have to report them to the Department of Homeland Security, and then I am in trouble with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This needs to be revised. At this point, IRBs, as applied to national security affairs, are a threat to national security.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Dr. Stern.

Our next witness is Dr. Lorenzo Vidino. Dr. Vidino is the Director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University's Center for Cyber and Homeland Security. He specializes in Islamism and political violence in Europe and North America. The program he directs at George Washington recently published a report called "ISIS in America: A Detailed Look at Legal Cases of Jihadism in the United States." Dr. Vidino.

TESTIMONY OF LORENZO G. VIDINO, PH.D.,¹ DIRECTOR, PROGRAM ON EXTREMISM, CENTER FOR CYBER AND HOMELAND SECURITY, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Mr. VIDINO. Thank you very much. Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to be speaking here in front of you today.

While the vast majority of American Muslims clearly reject, as we heard, the Islamic State's narrative and tactics, the number of arrests and open investigations that we see throughout the country tell us that the current mobilization of Americans attracted to the Islamic State is unprecedented in size. It is also astonishingly diverse. It includes men and women, teenagers and men in their 40s, university students and petty criminals, people born into Islam and converts, and people born in America and recent immigrants. There is absolutely no such thing as a typical Islamic State sympathizer in America.

Individuals with such diverse backgrounds are unlikely to be motivated by the same factors. Radicalization is a highly complex and individualized process, often shaped by a poorly understood mix of a variety of factors which are overlapping.

One of them, which is cynically exploited by the propaganda of ISIS, is a deep sense of empathy for the suffering of the Syrian people, and that was true particularly at the beginning of the Syrian conflict. But by the time ISIS formally declared its caliphate in June 2014, the motivations of recruits appear to revolve more around fulfilling perceived religious obligations. Unquestionably, the main motivation today is that of living in a perfect Islamic society under the world's only authentic Islamic government, as its supporters believe the caliphate declared by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to be. Whether in online conversations or in interrogations with authorities following their arrest, the appeal of living in this utopian

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Vidino appears in the Appendix on page 64.

Islamic society is cited by the vast majority of American ISIS sympathizers.

Indeed, despite the attention that it has received in the West, ISIS's main appeal is not so much in its sleek social media campaign. It is, rather, its territoriality, as you correctly said at the beginning. What matters is the message, the substance, not so much how the message is spread. So I think that there is a bit of a misguided focus on social media where in reality the issue is the core of the message.

As is typical of an ideology that mixes politics and religion, the obligation to join and defend the caliphate spans both. Similarly, motivations professed by American jihadists often frame what could appear to be religious factors in political terms, and vice versa. Political grievances are seen through religious lenses. Similarly, their political solutions are framed as fulfillments of religious obligations.

The political grievances of American ISIS sympathizers run the gamut. Some are of a global nature. But many American ISIS sympathizers are equally, if not more, interested in domestic events, such as the riots in Ferguson or the current debate about Islam in America. These events all represent, in the conspiratorial worldview they have adopted, proof of the evil nature of America and every other entity or idea that ISIS opposes.

Religious and political motivations are also impossible to separate from personal ones, as Jessica was saying. A search for belonging, meaning, and identity appear to be crucial motivators for many Americans who embrace ISIS's ideology.

Some individuals are particularly vulnerable, suffering from deep emotional issues or personality disorders. But in many other cases, the individuals who embrace ISIS's message are seemingly well adjusted. Rather, they are simply individuals on a personal quest.

Moreover, most American ISIS sympathizers suffer from none of the socioeconomic and integration issues that are often, somewhat superficially, considered the main causes of radicalization of European Muslims, for example, therefore making the often adopted "radicalization is caused by lack of integration" mantra highly debatable. When looking for explanations of radicalization processes, I think it is arguable that psychology provides more answers than sociology.

To conclude, ISIS is just the latest, and probably not the last, in a series of groups who have adopted what we would call "jihadist ideology." The defeat of ISIS, as despicable as ISIS is, will not stop the violence. Only the defeat of jihadist ideology will, so the problem is much larger than ISIS.

Thank you very much for your attention, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Dr. Vidino.

Our final witness is Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi. Dr. Mirahmadi is the President of the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE). This nonprofit educational organization counters violent extremist ideologies by promoting charitable, service-oriented alternatives. She developed "A Community-Based Approach to Countering Radicalization: A Partnership for America," one of the first Muslim-led reports to address grassroots strategies

to counter violent extremism and build resilient communities. She also has a degree in Islamic doctrine and has contributed to books on related topics. Dr. Mirahmadi.

TESTIMONY OF HEDIEH MIRAHMADI,¹ PRESIDENT, WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Thank you so much, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the honor of testifying before you today.

Although the U.S. Government and our allies have spent millions of dollars in research to determine what is drawing Westerners to groups like ISIS, unfortunately we still do not have a terrorist profile. We actually cannot even prove one single factor to predict who would become a terrorist.

But what we do know from the empirical research on convicted terrorists are some of the indicators that exist in many of those cases which may make an individual more vulnerable. We heard about several of those from both Jessica and Lorenzo. We also learned, as Lorenzo's report has told us, that over 40 percent of those arrested for ISIS-related crimes were Muslim converts, so that means that they grew up in a house that did not practice Islam. This tells us that no family is immune from the threat and that the solution will lie in a holistic approach.

However, just because we cannot predict who will be a terrorist, it does not mean that we cannot or should not do anything or that what we do cannot be measured.

In fact, we can design programs and clearly articulate a theory of change that connects the program activities with the risk factors that we are trying to reduce. If we measure those with traditional and innovative evaluation tools, we can show whether they reduced the vulnerabilities of program participants.

At my organization, WORDE, that is what we did to create and adapt a community-led partnership with local government, known as the Montgomery County Model. I am pleased to say that after 2 years of rigorous scientific evaluation, funded by the National Institute of Justice, it is now the only evidence-based Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program in the country.

It has a great potential to revolutionize community policing, allowing the community to lead and building relationships of trust and respect among diverse community members, rather than separating them off into silos that further feed distrust and isolation. This relationship among community members is more critical now than ever. Domestic terror attacks are creating fault lines in our society that will only lead to more violence if not repaired. The separation of Muslims from non-Muslims feeds into that bifurcated worldview of the terrorists who are saying, "It is us versus them, the West against Islam." A comprehensive prevention agenda must include programs that prevent that divide, so that there is only an "us" against the terrorists.

In response to the need for specialized individual interventions, we also provide counseling and direct services for those who may

¹ The prepared statement of Ms. Mirahmadi appears in the Appendix on page 76.

be at risk of radicalization, before they choose a path of violence. Ours is the first of its kind in the United States.

Besides treating the psycho-social needs of clients, our team can also tackle the ideological risk factors by referring the individual to a mentor. It used to be that becoming a violent jihadist took years of religious indoctrination. The process was long because the Islam that they preached was so foreign to mainstream interpretations of the faith that they had to undo what Muslims have believed for centuries. And besides, their calls to suicide and killing of innocent civilians was, quite frankly, unappealing.

Unfortunately, civil war in Syria, continued persecution of Sunnis in Iraq, and upheavals across the Middle East provided the perfect opportunity for the jihadist recruiters to reformulate the strategy. Constant depictions of torture and bombing of families in the region, motivated young Muslims across the world to go and join the “humanitarian jihad” and save Muslims who were dying at the hands of brutal dictators. Many of them were not even radicalized until they reached the battlefield. Suddenly, as if almost overnight, the terrorists had discovered the holy grail of recruitment: encourage people to come and build, not to come and die. That message would appeal to young and old alike, Muslim and non-Muslim. Anyone who saw the global powers as corrupt and oppressive would be welcome in this new utopia of misfits.

As a result, taking someone off of the path now requires more than just a Muslim preacher. The process must include a culturally proficient, trained professional that can resolve the feelings of cultural homelessness and help the individual find a sense of belonging and purpose in our society.

Since our program follows the protected health information guidelines of professionals, our client information is kept entirely outside the purview of law enforcement unless an individual is an “imminent threat” or a “threat to national security.” If we want to encourage more community groups to get involved or to enter this space, there needs to be more legal guidelines for practitioners, including how do we balance the privacy rights of our clients with national security interests.

The government has created numerous violence prevention programs and alternatives to prison sentencing for all sorts of crimes. There is no reason why we cannot establish guidelines for extremist cases as well. Most importantly, communities need resources to create the multidisciplinary community-based prevention programs that can operate independently of law enforcement, as well as diversion programs that can actually treat radicalized individuals. It is impractical to think that we are going to arrest our way out of this problem. With thousands of individuals across the country that are vulnerable to radicalization, it is irresponsible of us not to create alternatives.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Dr. Mirahmadi.

I will start with the questioning. I really do want to concentrate on trying to describe the full dimension of this problem. Senator Carper talked about the number of Muslims in the world. There are about 1.6 billion, according to Pew Research. Dr. Haykel, do you have any sense in terms of what percent of the Muslim popu-

lation would identify with this extreme version of radical Islam, Islamic terrorism? Because one percent would be 16 million.

Mr. HAYKEL. Right. Senator, you put your finger on it, which is that even a small percentage of people who identify with this movement would still be a very large number.

I think, though, when it comes to identification, one has to make certain distinctions. So, for example, in Saudi Arabia, a country that I visit often, there are a number of people who do not actually share the Islamic State's ideology or goals—they would never want to be ruled by the Islamic State—but nonetheless feel that they are the good guys out there fighting the good fight because they are fighting against Shiites, they are fighting against Americans, and so on.

There are people in the Middle East, for instance, who would never want to be ruled by them and do not identify with them, but still see them as heroes.

Chairman JOHNSON. And support them financially?

Mr. HAYKEL. Private individuals may support them financially.

Chairman JOHNSON. So, again, is one percent wildly too large? Again, I am just trying to get some sort of feel, because often we say, well, this is just a very small percentage, but a very small percentage could be a very large problem.

Mr. HAYKEL. Right. So in terms of actual recruits, I think the numbers and estimates that I have seen vary from about 30,000 to 100,000. A hundred thousand out of 1.5 billion is a very small—

Chairman JOHNSON. But, again, that is recruits into ISIS, into the caliphate.

Mr. HAYKEL. Yes, that is right, people who are fighting.

Chairman JOHNSON. There are news reports that show that there are ISIS-affiliated branches in 30 different countries. We are seeing ISIS move into Afghanistan to take over the poppy fields.

You were talking about how we do not want to overreact.

Mr. HAYKEL. Right.

Chairman JOHNSON. And, by the way, I realize ISIS is not going to come in and invade America and offer an existential threat here. I do not want to be putting ideas into the minds of terrorists. But, it does not take much of an imagination to understand that a coordinated homegrown terrorist effort could do unbelievable economic harm. Brussels did not have a terrorist attack, and yet it shut down after the Paris attack. So we have heard that we should adopt a strategy of strategic patience. OK, we do not want to overreact, but as long as ISIS maintains that territory, they are going to continue to inspire what could be incredibly damaging events—maybe not existential, but unbelievably damaging.

So how do we deal with it? I mean, do we recognize that territory is the primary motivator? Come and build, as Dr. Mirahmadi was talking about? Come and build, build that utopian society. As long as that territory exists, we are going to be under threat. And, again, we will continue to be—even if we defeat ISIS, even if we deny them the territory, we have all these affiliates, all these branches of this extreme ideology around the world.

So what is the full extent of this threat? I do not think strategic patience is working.

Mr. HAYKEL. Well, military victory is the most significant contributor to recruitment. The fact that in 2014 they were able to conquer so much territory—

Chairman JOHNSON. ISIS's military victory?

Mr. HAYKEL. Correct. It made it seem like the reality was confirming that they were chosen by God to represent Muslims and to win in the name of Islam. So making them lose militarily is extremely important in drying up the fantasy that they are projecting and the appeal that they have to recruits. So it is very important to defeat them militarily.

Chairman JOHNSON. But, again, would you be describing that as an overreaction? I want to go to Dr. Stern because you are talking about the contradictory goals, which are: grow this movement, grow the caliphate, and, at the same time, draw us in to defeat them, so that they end up with the final battle of Dabiq, or whatever. What is the name of that? Yes, Dabiq. Talk about that. Talk about that contradiction.

Ms. STERN. Yes, there is a contradiction. I do not think that our policy should be dictated just because they want us to fight them in a final battle in Dabiq. I mean, I do think that we need to fight them. I think anything we can do to not feed into their fantasy that the West is at war with Islam is good. Therefore, special forces are better than big armies. Sunni Arab forces are much better than Western forces. But, I think it is important to point out that, as you say, this organization is now in many parts of the world. In Libya, it is very important. Afghanistan—it is also there. It is an ideology that is here as well.

I am not sure that the victory narrative that I know you are quite interested in is so important. I think that, in a sense—why victory? Victory is important because of this sense of disenfranchisement, humiliation, and the sense that Islam has fallen behind the West. It has. We need to find a way for young Muslims and those who sympathize with them, including converts, to find another way to be heroes.

Chairman JOHNSON. But rebuilding these societies that have existed for quite some time, these governments that are authoritarian and that offend our sensibility of freedom and democracy, that is a long-term project. Can we sit back and be strategically patient and allow this caliphate and the territory to exist and have that threat continue to grow? Because I think that it will continue to grow.

One way that we can counteract that goal is to not let the final battle be in Dabiq. Let us take Dabiq first and let the final battle be someplace else. I am not being flippant here. We have to understand what they are trying to accomplish, but, again, I just do not think that we can be strategically patient. I think that we have to defeat them. I think that we have to deny that territory as our first step in a very long struggle. And let us face it, this struggle—let me be clear. We are not declaring war on Islamic terrorists. They declared war on us—I think, definitely starting in the early 1990s with the bombing of the USS *Cole*, and the attack in Saudi Arabia, and then the attempt to take down the Twin Towers initially in New York. If you are going to end a war, there are two ways of doing it: either both sides agree to end the war—and it is obvious

to me that Islamic terrorists are not agreeing to end the war—or one side has to be defeated.

And so, trying to make this simple, I sit there and go, well, this caliphate is something that is pretty attractive. People want to go there. They want to either get there physically or become adherents and, as they are being encouraged to, kill where they are.

So, to me, that is the first step that we have to undertake, and the sooner, the better. I just do not think that we can be strategically patient.

I will go to you, Dr. Vidino.

Mr. VIDINO. You are absolutely right. I think the reason for ISIS's success is its success, the fact that it has controlled territory. I think that if the Syrian conflict had gone in a different way for a variety of reasons, and Jhabat al-Nusra had taken over territory and created this State-like structure, Jhabat al-Nusra would be the big problem that we would be facing. I think ISIS was just better militarily, but there were a lot of circumstances there on the ground that led ISIS to be the one controlling territory. But it is that territoriality which is the main appeal for a lot of people, whether it is in the Middle East or here, in the West.

I think that to some degree—I do not want to be overly negative, but it is almost too late because the State has been around for a year and a half now. So that idea, even if we were tomorrow to completely destroy what is the Islamic State, the idea or the fact that they created that society for a year and a half will linger for a long time, and you will find plenty of groups that will try to recreate that.

Obviously, there are also, from a secret military and terrorism point of view, significant problems in keeping that structure there. There is more pressure on them now, and it makes it, to some degree, more difficult to expand their territory. They are losing territory. There is some pressure that does not allow them to plan attacks in the way that they would probably have been able to a few months ago, but now they are indeed planning them more. So, yes, they are being bombed. They are running from place to place, to some degree. But part of that strategy has been that they are also trying to carry out attacks, and I think Paris was obviously probably the first successful one, at least in the West, of an attack that was planned with some strategy. It was not just left to some lone individual to carry out. There was some strategy behind it, some planning, centralized planning involved.

Clearly, I think that is one of the lessons from the 9/11 Commission. The more you allow an organization, a terrorist organization—and ISIS is more than a terrorist organization, but the more that you allow them to plan and have a sanctuary, the more dangerous they are going to be.

Chairman JOHNSON. They have revenue streams. They control research labs within universities. I will just quickly let Dr. Mirahmadi comment, and then I will turn it over to Senator Carper.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Well, I definitely agree with the comments of my colleagues. I just want to add, though, that I think, long term and generationally, we are not going to bomb our way out of this problem. So even if we solve the military battles and we win

against ISIS in terms of its controlling territory, ISIS is just a metastasized version of al-Qaeda and the groups that came before it.

So I think that what we really need to bring to bear on this struggle is our other resources, both domestically and through foreign policy. For example, let us face it, our Western governments have been complicit or tacitly allowed a lot of the Gulf States to export this very virulent, intolerant ideology across the Muslim world and throughout Western countries. It has destroyed the cultural fabric of a lot of these countries. I mean, thousands and thousands of Pakistanis, Afghanis, Asians, and Africans have died trying to defeat it.

So I think that it is very important that we use our diplomatic leverage with those countries to tell them to stop exporting that stuff and try fixing all the damage that they have caused so far.

In addition, we should also bolster the efforts of countries like Egypt, who is now in a post-Islamist government who wants to use its might and its religious infrastructure to start exporting the opposite—start exporting a pluralistic interpretation of Islam. And that, quite frankly, is the core, it is the mainstream fundamental of Islam, so let us help them and empower them to be able to do this in a way that is authentic to the rest of the Muslim world.

So I think that from a foreign policy perspective, we still have a lot of resources to bear on this problem that we need to use long term. And then domestically, as I mentioned, we need to be intervening and preventing the radicalization in the first place.

Chairman JOHNSON. So, again, I understand that it is a multifaceted, generational problem, but just a quick answer. We have to deny them that territory, correct?

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Yes, absolutely.

Chairman JOHNSON. The fact that the caliphate exists is a real problem.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Absolutely. But, we still have all these other steps that we have to simultaneously—

Chairman JOHNSON. I know. It is a nasty, big problem. I got it. OK, Senator Carper.

Senator CARPER. Again, our thanks to each of you for joining us today. Dr. Stern, thank you for writing a couple of really good books, really informative books, in one of them, "Terror in the Name of God," which I was struck by the way you went into—literally across the world, right into the heart of the centers of these violent folks, these violent groups, and talked to them. Why did they let you in? And why did they open up like that to you? It was amazing to me.

Ms. STERN. Terrorists, in my experience, young people, really do want to talk, and that is one of the reasons that I am frustrated that at a university it is impossible for me to replicate that kind of work, even in prisons. It is very hard for us to get into prisons because of the IRB rules at our universities and also at the prisons. There is a wealth of information that we could be collecting.

I also think that Saudi Arabia is actually, perhaps ironically, at the cutting edge in thinking about prevention and counterradicalization. They have been spreading this Wahhabi ideology everywhere where they think it might work.

I just came back from Bosnia a couple of days ago. They have been very active in Bosnia. Bosnia is very vulnerable now. Why can't we—and you know a lot about this, Dr. Haykel—try to get them to help run a prevention and counterradicalization campaign? They did not mean to be spreading ISIS ideology. They meant to be spreading Wahhabi ideology.

What do you think of that, Dr. Haykel?

Senator CARPER. Go ahead, Dr. Haykel. What do you think about that?

Mr. HAYKEL. I think that the Saudis are extremely important in this fight, and I am always in favor of getting others to do the heavy lifting when we cannot do it or we should not be doing it. So they are definitely partners.

As far as Wahhabism is concerned, this is just a very literalist interpretation of the faith, and it does come with money, but money is not enough to turn people to this version of the faith. I mean, I think that people turn to it because it responds to particular anxieties that modern people have—that modern Muslims have.

So I think that just to blame Wahhabism for the rise of ISIS is wrong. But the Saudis would definitely be helpful in this regard.

Senator CARPER. We spend a fair amount of time on this Committee focusing on root causes, as opposed to symptoms of problems. I will use an example. Our border with Mexico, we spent about a quarter of a trillion dollars in the last 10 years to fortify the border—walls, dirigibles, blimps, drones, and some 20,000 Border Patrol personnel. And that is all well and good, but we spent about one percent of that—not even one percent of that—addressing the root causes of emigration factors in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and the misery that those people live in and how we have contributed to that misery.

The Chairman and I have been down—and some others on the Committee have been down—to actually visit those countries. I was down and met with the Presidents, all three of them, just last week and did see how they are doing. They swore in a new President in Guatemala.

But we actually go to the source and say, “What are you willing to do to turn around your countries? And what do we need to do?” Because we are complicit in your misery, given our addiction to the drugs that travel through their countries.

If we had the ability to ask—I believe in asking your customer—our Chairman comes out of the business community. You always want to ask your customer. In this case, if we are asking those that are being drawn to ISIS—whether the folks have actually gone to fight militarily or to set up these satellite operations—to ask them as our customer, “Why you are doing this?” and to better understand how to counter it, what would they likely say? Hedieh, would you lead that off, please? Ms. Mirahmadi, what would they say? Just very briefly.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Well, I mean, to tell you the truth, I have tried to study this scientifically, so we tried to apply evaluation tools to determine what those root causes are, and I do not think that you can point to any one root cause. So I think that people have claimed that it is poverty, but we have debunked that theory be-

cause it cannot be just poverty because a lot of poor people do not become terrorists.

People say that it is social alienation, or it is disenfranchisement in Western countries, or it is ideology. I think that we have come to the conclusion that it is a range of risk factors that overlap and can cause a variety of responses. There is no single factor that has been proven to cause terrorism or proven as a root cause.

Senator CARPER. OK.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. So it is a lot of things, and it is everything at once.

Senator CARPER. OK. Thank you. Mr. Vidino.

Mr. VIDINO. Unfortunately, I have to be as equally vague as Hedieh because the reality is that it is such a diverse—if we just look at the sample in the United States, the 80 individuals who have been arrested for ISIS-related activities, the diversity is staggering, the profiles: 40 percent converts, different levels of knowledge of Islam, for example. We have people who convert literally on Google and overnight think they know everything about Islam and they think that it is their religious duty to go and join ISIS. But you also have people who have grown up in the faith, actually they are Hafiz, who have memorized the Koran, they are teachers themselves in Islamic schools in the States, and then try to join ISIS. So there is absolutely no one answer.

The psychological profile of a lot of them is that they feel the need to help. It is obviously misguided, but there is, I think, a lot of evidence that they are people with a high sense of empathy, of compassion, and they feel that they are doing something good or that they are helping.

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

Dr. Stern, you ask this question of a lot of people. “Why do you do this?”

Ms. STERN. Yes, I agree with my colleagues that there absolutely is no single root cause, no typical pathway. But we do know that the lone wolves—I mean, this is one thing that actually has come out of the literature. Lone wolves are much more likely to have mental illness. This is the thing we are most worried about now, lone wolves, here in the United States, not what we are worried about over there.

We are finding in a study that I have been involved with at Children’s Hospital in Boston that a lot of time on the Internet is a risk factor. But there are so many risk factors. Obviously, I spend a lot of time on the Internet doing my research, and it is not a risk factor for me to join ISIS.

I think that we are not going to get very far in identifying exactly what the risk factors are, but that we can use what we learn about each individual who is thinking about it and who is sitting on the fence. How do we stop that person from joining? We need to understand each individual. And I feel very strongly about the efforts to talk to these kids one on one online before they join, and also to deploy formers, people who have actually joined and recognized that it is not a heroic existence and that joining ISIS was nothing like what they had imagined.

There are hundreds of clerics all over the world, learned scholars, who have said, “Well, this is not Islam”—that is not quite true. It

is based on Islam. But, “This is not the Islam that we believe in.” They are boring. We need people who can communicate with these kids who find the idea of ISIS appealing.

So we need to understand, with each individual, why they are drawn and to address that.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. My time is up. Let me just close with this thought. In an earlier existence, as a Governor, I was a founding Vice Chairman of something called the “American Legacy Foundation,” created out of the tobacco settlement, 50 States and the tobacco industry, a lot of money flowed out of that to the States to offset the health care costs that States were incurring because of tobacco. One of the things that came out of it was \$1 billion or more to set up a foundation called the “American Legacy Foundation.” The responsibility of the foundation was to create a truth campaign to convince young people who were thinking of smoking not to and young people who were already smoking to stop. And the message was developed not by us, but actually by young people, sort of like you are suggesting, and they worked with public relations folks who were really good at messaging and did a multimedia campaign. And if you think it might have worked, look at the rates of teen smoking from about 2001 until the end of that decade. Remarkable. But the key was, as you suggest, to go to other young people and let them help develop the message—this is why smoking is bad for you. This is why you do not want to do it—and to be able to use that source of delivery to convey the message. And maybe that is part of what we need to do here.

There is an entity within the Department of Homeland Security—it is called the “Office of Community Partnerships”—which is designed, in part, to do that work, and we are trying to help connect them with the people in the American Legacy Foundation, who have done this truth campaign successfully and see if maybe this is a way to do it to address an even graver threat than tobacco.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Carper. Senator Peters.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PETERS

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our panelists for what I think is very interesting testimony, and on something that is so important so that we get a better understanding of what we are dealing with from an ideological standpoint, from a messaging standpoint, and from the general narrative that we are hearing from ISIS as they are recruiting folks and moving forward with their terrorist activities.

I think that it is important to bring this hearing to what is happening actually later today on the Senate floor. We are going to be dealing with an issue related to refugees. Certainly right now, we are dealing with a humanitarian crisis that we have not seen since the Second World War. We have folks who are fleeing ISIS. Dr. Haykel, I think that you mentioned that folks would not want to live under ISIS rule. We have people who have been persecuted, who live in fear, who live in terror, and who are fleeing that part of the world as fast as they can, both Syria and Iraq, looking for a safe haven.

The United States, in my view, should welcome folks as refugees, those who are legitimate refugees, as part of our commitment to the world community. Yet there are people who are saying, “No, we should shut down the refugee program, we should not accept any refugees in this country.”

I would like to hear from each of the panelists. To what extent does the fact that there are certain folks in the United States who believe that we should shut down a refugee program that accepts people who are fleeing the terror and fleeing ISIS, play into ISIS’s narrative? Or is that a good thing for us to be doing? Let us start with Dr. Haykel.

Mr. HAYKEL. So the refugee crisis in the Middle East is largely the result of the civil wars and the governments themselves not keeping the State together. In the case of Syria, for instance, the refugees are largely produced by the Assad regime, a regime that is backed by both Russia and Iran. ISIS does not actually allow the people it rules over to leave the territory.

The way in which the refugee issue plays out—and the only way that I have seen it was, most recently, in the way that Mr. Trump mentioned that Muslims should not be allowed into this country. That plays into the ISIS narrative because it basically confirms that the United States is an enemy of Islam. But more broadly, I do not think that ISIS is focused on the debate over refugees, in general.

Senator PETERS. Well, we heard from a previous panel, and folks were saying that refugees are somewhat of an embarrassment to ISIS because their narrative is that people should welcome the caliphate and people should want to come. So why does everyone want to leave the area and not come into their protective sphere, I should say?

Mr. HAYKEL. Right, you are correct. ISIS calls for Muslims to give their oath of allegiance to the caliphate and then to come to the territory. Most of the people, though, who have left that region have left actually—for instance, Christians are a large percentage of the people who are leaving because they are persecuted, both by ISIS and other Islamists there; also moderates, liberals, all kinds of people who have left actually are people who would not fit into an ISIS-like world or a world in which Islamism dominates, whether it is ISIS or—many of the other groups, for instance, in Syria are all Islamists. Most of the opposition is Islamist and intolerant of difference.

But you are right. I think that those who have left ISIS territory and who describe what life is like under ISIS are extremely important in the propaganda war against ISIS because they come out and they describe it as a “living hell.”

Senator PETERS. Any other panelists?

Ms. STERN. I would say that I agree with you that we must accept refugees. I think that we must thoroughly investigate them. I think that we must recognize that ISIS will try to insert operatives into that refugee flow. I think that those are facts.

At the same time, if we do not accept the refugees, that harms our position in the long run even more. It is not just ISIS, as my colleagues keep saying. This is an ideology. We can defeat ISIS. There will be another iteration of this jihadist ideology.

Senator PETERS. Dr. Vidino?

Mr. VIDINO. I agree. If we look, for example, at the numbers of individuals who were arrested in the U.S., only really a handful have a refugee background. We basically had two cases of people, very simply, one in Texas and one in California, with a refugee background out of people arrested for ISIS-related activities. There were a couple of other individuals of Bosnian and Somali backgrounds who have a refugee background, but their radicalization took place here in the States well after receiving asylum.

I agree that it is, to some degree, an opportunity, but we are missing—if we are welcoming people, we should be telling these stories. They are an asset in undermining the ISIS narrative. I am not seeing that kind of message being put out in a good way, stories being told in the right way, being put on social media, whether in Arabic, whether in English and other languages, of people saying, “I left ISIS because of this and this and that, and I am now here, and I am being treated humanely and everything.” We are doing something nice. We are not then using that opportunity.

Senator PETERS. OK.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. I think that there is a corollary issue about the refugees as well, in that we have to make sure that we are providing the requisite services for them to adapt to life in the United States. We actually have a lot of clients who are refugees, and a lot of them are having a real difficult time adjusting to life in the United States because they do not speak the language, and they have suffered from years of post traumatic stress disorder from war and from losing family members. And so it is really important that the refugee resettlement services are doing their job and also referring them for psychiatric services or other kinds of therapeutic needs that they may have to make sure that when they do come here, they are acclimating and integrating into society and not leading to further problems down the road.

Senator PETERS. So, if I could summarize, you believe that the refugee program is an important aspect of U.S. policy, that it speaks to our values as Americans, and that we do welcome folks who are fleeing persecution and violence. Certainly, we have to make sure that we are screening those refugees and that we have a process to protect the homeland, which I believe very strongly in, that we have a very vigorous screening process. But, nevertheless, refugee program provides a very important element in pushing back against this extremism, not just with ISIS, but just generally. In fact, as all of you have said, defeating ISIS by itself is important, but that is not the end. There is still much more that we have to do, and having a credible, workable, and secure refugee program in the United States, and then using the stories that these refugees can tell us about what they are fleeing and why American values are so important, will be important to our effort. Is that accurate? Does anybody disagree?

[No response.]

Let the record reflect that no one disagrees with that. Thank you so much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Peters.

Let me just quickly repeat what I have said, which is that if we are going to accept, let us say, 10,000 refugees, which is just a pit-

tance in terms of the numbers of refugees, why do we not establish criteria, allow women and children who have been properly vetted and who are relatives of Syrian American citizens who can financially support them? I mean, would that not make sense? So, hopefully, the administration would take that type of advice, and I do not think that we would have much of an issue here. Senator Portman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PORTMAN

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As tempting as it is to get into the refugee issue, I am going to try to stay away from it, except to say one thing. We have had testimony in this very hearing room. Seated right where you are, Dr. Stern, in fact, was the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), who told us that there were gaps in intelligence that did not allow them to properly vet these refugees. And, of course, we should be helping the refugees, and as the Chairman has said, bringing 10,000 in, out of the roughly 4 million who have fled Syria, is a small drop in the bucket. A much larger role that the United States plays is supporting these refugees as they are trying to reestablish their lives in these refugee camps, and we should and can play a huge role there, and we do. American tax dollars are used. But we do need to protect the homeland as well, and I guess that is where my questioning would be.

I do not disagree with the comments about taking on ISIS in the current caliphate that they are developing in Syria and Iraq. I think that we need to be more aggressive militarily, and I do think, to Professor Haykel's comments, that a military victory is an important victory, outside of the military aspect, because it shows that they are not invulnerable. It shows that they, in fact, can be defeated.

I also believe that we have to protect the homeland in more effective ways, including better screening, and not just for refugees. That is, of course, a very small part of the people who come here. The visa programs, obviously we had this issue arise in San Bernardino, where a spousal visa was used to gain entry for one of the terrorists, and we did not do the proper vetting, including looking at her social media, which would have been the obvious thing to do. And, of course, people coming across our borders illegally, so protecting the homeland is critical.

But to me, the most difficult part of this and the most important part, which is why this hearing is so important—and I thank the Chair and Ranking Member for holding it, and I thank our witnesses who have provided us with a lot of very valuable information—is dealing with the core issue. Some call it the “hearts and minds.” I do not know if that is an appropriate way to describe it, but, essentially, how to keep this extremism from growing. And the jihadists who have converged in Syria come from all over the world, and we know that.

We also know that attacks are occurring all over the world. We have a New York Times story from December. Some of you know this. I counted up the number of deaths from terrorism. This is not from military actions by ISIS. This is really from terrorism. It is over 1,500 people who have been killed in the last year through

terrorist attacks, including some we know a lot about, like Paris and San Bernardino, and others we just do not talk about much. So how do we get at changing the hearts and minds?

Professor Haykel, you talked about our first and best line of defense being the Muslim community. I could not agree with you more, and I think we do not spend enough time and effort on that. I was riding with police officers in Columbus, Ohio over the weekend, in the communities in Columbus that are Muslim communities, particularly the Somali community there. How do we encourage better communication and cooperation to the point that we heard earlier from Dr. Mirahmadi about separation versus, I would say, inclusion or social alienation versus, I would say, community involvement? How do you get that interaction? I think that is incredibly important, and we are not doing enough there, and it is about domestic terrorism and the fact that we do have, even with success overseas, a problem right here at home.

Dr. Vidino talked about this interest of living in a utopian Islamic society. We need to have the counternarrative to that, obviously, much more effectively online and elsewhere. You talked about the core of the message being more important than the medium. In other words, we can complain about the fact that we do not do an effective job to counter it online, which I believe we do not, but also we have to get at the core message as well.

And then Dr. Stern had a number of interesting comments. One that I thought was the most interesting was that we can defeat ISIS, it will just crop up elsewhere, essentially that was what you were saying. And it is almost like Whac-A-Mole. If we are successful in Syria—I look at, again, this New York Times story and the analysis that we have done. There are at least ten other countries where ISIS now has a presence, a huge one in Libya, for instance. And even beyond ISIS, of course, other groups will emerge because of the core. And then we also have the example from Dr. Mirahmadi, as an expert, saying we are not going to bomb our way out of this problem and talking about other ways to deal with it.

So that is what I want to get at, if I could just get more ideas from you all. What should we be doing? You mentioned Egypt. There are also other Sunni countries that should be playing a more aggressive role in, as you say, exporting not Salafi jihadi Islam, but traditional Islam. What more can be done there? You mentioned, Dr. Stern, deploying former jihadists, using clerics more, and the counter narrative that we talked about. If each of you could give me a couple of examples of what we should be doing to address this third, and I think most difficult, problem that we face of how to get at the core and how we change those hearts and minds. Let us start with Dr. Mirahmadi and go to our right.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. So in addition to the things that we could do with Egypt, Morocco, and Indonesia—when I talk about helping them export, I meant materials, curriculum, books, and Imam training programs. So basically what the Wahhabis—what the Salafists did—was they exported such material, through this mechanism of taking over small centers, creating new centers of learning, starting at a very young age, and then establishing an Imam in these centers that would then basically change the ideology of the community around them. So we need to do the reverse. We

need these countries to train Imams, create curriculums, and start creating that kind of groundswell around traditional pluralistic concepts of Islam. And I am not talking about making it up on the fly. This is part of 1,200 years of Islamic history that they can use.

Senator PORTMAN. We should use our leverage, the United States' diplomatic leverage——

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Diplomatic, exactly.

Senator PORTMAN [continuing]. Economic leverage, whatever leverage we have. That is an urgent need.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Absolutely. And we are doing it. I know that our cooperation with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), hosting conferences, for example, Sheikh Bin Bayya is also doing a number of events that are cosponsored by the United States. So I know that we are doing it. For example, Al-Azhar University and its network has 400,000 students at any one time—400,000 people. So that is a lot of people that could influence the way the ideological religious dynamic plays out in the next 5 to 10 years.

Senator PORTMAN. Dr. Vidino.

Mr. VIDINO. Yes, generally speaking, I think that the United States has been somewhat reluctant to get into the religious debate, for obvious reasons: separation of church and State, and because it is a religion that we are not very familiar with. And I think that reluctance, to some degree, has to go, although we do not have to do it directly, but I think there needs to be more support for the right people—whether it is governments or, even better, civil society organizations abroad, and domestically, to work on the religious aspect of it. It is not purely a religious problem, clearly, we all agree, but there is a big religious component there.

I said that maybe we sometimes overestimate the online aspect. Now I am going to reverse what I said. I think a lot of the message is out there. You mentioned Morocco, Jordan, and the UAE. A lot of these countries do put out a lot of very good products, very good reinterpretations of Islamic texts that undermine ISIS's interpretations. But they are not slick, they are not cool—they need to be marketed in the right way. You go to these conferences, and you have a lot of people with a lot of gray hair. You do not get to the right people. And often you reach those right people through social media. So it is a matter of repackaging, and I think that is a goal, to have a lot of—I do not know if there are a lot of debates, but conversations between the White House and Google and Facebook and so on. And I think that is one other aspect where we should have that conversation, how to repackage——

Senator PORTMAN. My time is expiring. I want to be considerate of our other colleagues here, so I would like for the record if you all, Dr. Haykel and Dr. Stern, would provide me with specific examples, in addition to any more that Dr. Vidino and Dr. Mirahmadi have.

But one final question. The Office of Community Partnership has come before us from the Department of Homeland Security. Are they doing what you just said? Yes or no. Not so much.

Mr. VIDINO. Not so much.

Senator PORTMAN. OK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Portman. Senator Heitkamp.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HEITKAMP

Senator HEITKAMP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to get to a story that was just released in the last probably 20 hours, which is that ISIS is cutting the salaries of their fighters in half. And I think that it was unclear how they were dealing with food stipends. I think they thought that the food stipends were fairly consistent, but not the stipends for children and for wives. And that has to be an indicator of some of the challenges that they are experiencing right now, and I want your reaction to kind of the financial aspects of this, how we can do a better job to cripple this organization from a financial standpoint. I think \$26 oil is having a pretty dramatic effect. But beyond that, what does this reduction in salaries and assets mean for this organization, for this terrorist organization? And how can we further flame the financial challenges of ISIS? I would like everyone's reactions.

Mr. HAYKEL. So I am of the view that ISIS is actually losing and has been actually for quite a few months now, not only territory, but also financially.

One of the ways in which that can be furthered financially is to have better control over private financial flows out of the Persian Gulf, and here I am specifically talking about the countries of Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

Senator HEITKAMP. And I just will interrupt and say that we recently were on a trip to the Mideast, and this is exactly supported by what we heard there.

Mr. HAYKEL. Yes, and they are definitely trying to do this. The problem is that many of the payments take the form of cash bags that are carried across the border. So getting the Turks on board—because that is often where the cash is carried through—is extremely important.

But I think that would be very important, and then the way in which we are using special forces, in particular with the Kurds, is, I think, a model that should be replicated with other fighting groups on the ground. That is proving extremely effective as well.

Senator HEITKAMP. OK. Dr. Stern.

Ms. STERN. I guess one question I would want to ask is: Are they cutting the salaries of propagandists? We know from a really good story in the Washington Post, that the propagandists are actually paid more than the fighters.

Senator HEITKAMP. There is an indication that it is across the board, that all salaries are being reduced, not just fighters' salaries. But, again, this is based on intel that we are receiving, that is being reported.

Ms. STERN. Yes. So this is a very good sign. Stopping the sale of oil from ISIS to inside Syria, that is obviously pretty hard to accomplish. Also, they make money from so many different operations. They are selling amphetamines such as Captagon. They are managing to get those antiquities out. So this has to be a major effort to stop both the flow of foreign fighters in and the flow of goods out. I mean, I do not know what else to say. It is great. If this is happening, it is great.

Mr. VIDINO. I agree with everything that has been said, and I think that the emphasis on Turkey is there. It is all really about Turkey. Yes, the Gulf States in terms of private donations are very

difficult, but probably the crucial role there is to be played by Turkey.

I think what concerns me also, to some degree, is how many places ISIS has expanded to. Libya, it is probably also, from a financial point of view, particularly concerning because ISIS is starting to control parts of Libya, and this is also very crucial from an oil point of view and from an immigration point of view. It is sort of the end of a route that starts in Sub-Saharan Africa, where all sorts of goods and refugees are imported to Libya, and it is a gateway to Europe.

So there is a reason why ISIS is focusing on that part of Libya specifically, and why it is even telling its fighters not to go to Syria and Iraq any longer, but actually to shift to Libya. It is obviously because there is a political vacuum there. It is an opportunity. But it is a big financial opportunity as well.

Senator HEITKAMP. OK.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. I think that for some of the cases that we have seen here in the United States, financial incentives are important. So them learning about a reduction in financial incentives would hopefully reduce incentives to go. We had one case in particular, Mona Abu Salah, who talked about how he had food in his truck all of the time and that it was so great to have these resources in the caliphate. So I think that it is a very important issue.

And what tools we have mentioned already: the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), all of their financial control systems, designating more individuals to stop the flow of money, and reducing the price of oil. Anything we could do to cutoff their ability to provide financial incentives is important.

Senator HEITKAMP. I know that earlier we had this conversation about what are, in fact, the root causes, and I think that we could all argue that feeding someone's family and providing a salary in a war-torn area may, in fact, be a great incentive beyond the ideology and beyond the broader mission. And one of the things that has arisen in this discussion is, never mind the migration of refugees to this country, but once they are here, the need to provide social services so that we do not see radicalization. We could vet folks all we wanted, but once they come here, if they are alienated, if they feel isolated, and if they feel separated from the communities that they are living in, then that is another risk factor.

And so I want you, I guess, Doctor, to expand. I thought it was an important point that I want to reemphasize here because I do not think that anyone here is talking about eliminating refugees. What we are talking about is vetting them appropriately on the front end, but you raise a very important point, which is that there are risk factors if we do not manage the refugee population, if we do not assist the refugee population once they are here.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Absolutely. I mean, Lorenzo mentioned the fact that refugees were not radicalized before they came and the small number of cases. I mean, a case in point is Minnesota. So when you have a large resettlement effort—

Senator HEITKAMP. You are talking about the Somalis.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Yes. The resettlement agencies tend to focus on particular communities and continue to put refugees in a single place, thinking that they are creating a circle of resources. But the

problem is it also can ghettoize communities and not allow them to adjust and to integrate. So it is very important that there are social services provided and that there are also community service opportunities and other kinds of community-based programs that will help them to integrate in mainstream society, such as English language training and all sorts of job, vocational training, to make sure that once we do welcome refugees, which is a very important part of our society, that they do become productive, healthy, and integrated American citizens.

Senator HEITKAMP. Yes. I just wanted to reemphasize that point because I think that, as we are rightfully focused on what is the appropriate vetting process, we still have these challenges moving forward. And if we as a country do not have a more unified message, we risk our national security in not managing the refugee population that we have.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Absolutely.

Senator HEITKAMP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Heitkamp. Senator Booker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOOKER

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member.

I just want to say at the outset how much I appreciate you all being here, and your written testimony was really important. I am grateful for your presence here.

I just want you to know that there are many tools to stop ISIS. I think that one of the first things we need to be doing as a country is to put forth an Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) for this engagement. I think that it is actually an abdication of our authorities, as delineated by the Constitution, that we are engaging in such an important war without Congress at all doing its job and its constitutional duties. There are a lot of other things we need to do, from working with our allies, to making sure that we are coordinating efforts to destabilize and destroy ISIS. We need to craft a political solution, overall, to what is happen in Syria.

I say all of this at the outset because I tend to be focused a lot on the issue of counter-ISIS messaging, and I want to say that that is just one tool in a toolbox. But it is one that I really do not believe we are doing that well.

Ms. Stern, in your testimony you talked a lot, I think, about important information about the alienation and marginalization that can go on with young people—that they have had humiliating encounters with the police and that ignorance of Islam makes a youth more vulnerable to ISIS's ideologies. All of these things create an atmosphere with which people can be radicalized. And what I found interesting is an important point that I think needs to be understood. When it comes to those immediate threats in our Nation, you point specifically to the fact that it is the Western recruits that can so easily get back into this country, or never leave this country in the first place, who offer the most immediate threats to the safety and security of the United States of America. And so that is really where I want to drill down, because I am a little frustrated when it comes to our efforts at countermessaging.

Now, you mentioned at the outset of your testimony, that our counter-ISIS strategy is lacking in our investment in counternarratives that appeal to specifically Millennial youth. To that end, you will be offering a Peer-2-Peer (P2P) course in your classroom next fall, which sounds like an interesting course. Perhaps you should hold it here in Washington. My staff has been involved in extensive conversations with Tony Sgro, the founder of the P2P program. So we are very focused on this, and I am working on legislation right now to give DHS the tools to widely implement the Peer-2-Peer course.

So can you tell me, in your own words, what you believe are the benefits of the P2P program and why it is so critically needed?

Ms. STERN. I think that we really have not taken this issue, as you say, seriously enough. If you think about what we did during the Cold War, when we realized that we had to fight the Soviet ideology, it involved the private sector and the government working together with covert and overt programs. We spent a lot of money. It led to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). It led to Voice of America. We are not taking this nearly as seriously as we did—

Senator BOOKER. And, by the way, we still spend an extraordinary amount of money on those programs of the Cold War era.

Ms. STERN. Right, because they are effective.

Senator BOOKER. Well, I would question whether they were effective—and thank you very much—and we are spending hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money on things like Voice of America and not on the programs that you have such a specialty in.

Ms. STERN. Right. So Tony Sgro's course—it is amazing. This is a guy who had found a way to help Honda design cars—the car that a 19-year-old kid would want to buy, by having the youth get involved in the design of the car. Why not get youth involved in writing that counternarrative instead of a bunch of middle-aged people in the State Department or—

Senator BOOKER. With no disrespect to middle-aged people. [Laughter.]

Ms. STERN. Right. The program is now—it is in 30 countries. I have just spoken with a university in Bosnia where it is very important because of the spread of ISIS there. The kids get to develop their counternarrative. Hopefully they find some hip-hop artist who had joined ISIS and quit. They know what is attractive to young people. I think it is really important that this be offered not just in universities, but also in high schools. And as it happens, the Saudis are now going to try to offer this program in high schools. I would like to see that happen all over the world. I think it is so inexpensive compared with the money we spend on the military aspect of fighting ISIS. We can afford to experiment and see what works. So I am a big proponent of EdVentures and Peer-2-Peer—

Senator BOOKER. And I appreciate that, and just to highlight the urgency here—and I really want to turn to Professor Haykel, not only because I want to hear your testimony, but because you are from New Jersey and I should highlight you, sir. [Laughter.]

But, look, one of the factors in your explanation of the multifaceted appeal of the Islamic State is the massive youth bulge. We

are talking about a boom of Millennials within this region. Sixty percent of the population across the Arab world is under the age of 30. Think about that. Seventy-five percent of the population in Mali, for example—excuse me. The median age is 15.9. In Tunisia, youth unemployment among graduates is around thirty percent. So you have, in all of these countries, massive youth populations, and youth are making up the majority of the population in these countries where we are currently facing ISIS or its affiliates. How should this demographic reality, of these Millennials, as we were just talking about, really affect the way that we think about Syria, Iraq, and even Turkey and other countries in the region, to tune our strategy in terms of countermessaging?

Mr. HAYKEL. Thank you. I have been involved in seeing how ISIS recruits the Millennials. So, for instance, ISIS has created its own version of Grand Theft Auto, the video game. ISIS goes into where these young people are involved in discussions online and then lures them with its own version of these video games. So they are very sophisticated in basically using our culture, things that we have produced, and then distorting them for their purposes. So it is very important, I think, to focus on this.

And the other point is that these Millennials that you are talking about are actually, today, extremely connected through the Internet to the world, largely because in many countries of the Middle East, there is no other way to communicate and there is no other way to have a discussion, an open discussion.

So I think that one has to think about these young people, and especially the cultural products of the United States and how they are being contorted and distorted to attract these young people to extremism and radicalism.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you. So, in other words, we have a region of the globe that is a Millennial region, and we need to attune sort of the Baby Boomer and Gen X efforts to really focus in on language that they understand and that they are engaging in.

Mr. HAYKEL. That is absolutely correct.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Booker.

Just because you brought up AUMF—I am on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—let me give you my insight on that. I would say that as soon as this administration were to present and we were to have Democratic support for an Authorization for Use of Military Force that shows the full commitment of this Nation and this administration to accomplish the goal of defeating ISIS—it does not limit this administration, or the successor administration, in any way, shape, or form. You have that authorization, but we have not seen that yet. That is why we do not have one. Senator Ernst.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ERNST

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses today. It is very good to have this discussion, very relevant with everything that we have going on today.

Dr. Vidino, if I could start with you, please, in December your organization published a report, which I think was very well titled, “ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa.” And one of the re-

port's conclusions suggests that intervention is an effective alternative to arrest—and I would like to hear a little bit more about that—to really help sway some of those individuals from the path of radicalization. So you do note a potential number of issues with this intervention, including the lack of legal guidance and a set of best practices. So if you could expound a little bit on that, please, I would love to hear more about that.

Mr. VIDINO. Of course. Thank you very much for your question. What we advocate is a system—I think that we all understand, as we said earlier on the panel, that we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. And the FBI were the first ones to say this, that the numbers are too big. And I think in many cases, you have people who are minors or people anyways who have not crossed a certain threshold. So I think there should be at least the choice—the authorities should have the ability to, in some cases, of course, monitor, investigate, arrest, and go the hard traditional way, but there should be, in certain cases, an ability to have a system in place where some kind of mentoring, some kind of intervention is carried out.

Of course, there are different ways of doing this. You have a lot of European countries that have been experimenting with this with mixed results, but I think that they have gotten much better over the last 3 or 4 years in how to do that, whether it is law enforcement directly that does it or, as I would personally advocate, the lighter the footprint of government, the better, so it is civil society that does that, of course, with some kind of guidelines that come from the government, some kind of clear legal guidelines about what can be done when the intervention transcends into criminal investigation and so on. But things need to be clarified from the beginning. It also has to be very clear in the message that is sent to the community, because there has been a lot of controversy and a lot of pushback from some quarters in the Muslim community that Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVE) interventions are used as ways to spy on communities and so on. I think that it should be done in a very clear way, explaining that these are ways, not to criminalize people, but actually to help people not criminalize themselves. This is a way out for people, before they cross a certain line and do something that is criminally relevant, and also something that damages their own lives.

So finding the right people, finding the right partners, whether it is an Imam, people from a religious background, or in some cases they do not have to be, but people that can find a way to gain the trust of these young people who are radicalizing and sway them. And, of course, it is not easy. It does not work all of the time. But the European experience tells us that it works—for example, in the U.K., they talk about a sixty to seventy percent success rate. That is huge. That takes away a big, big chunk of work from what the FBI has to do. Their resources are spread thin. If we eliminate sixty to seventy percent of people who are potentially dangerous, but just starting to flirt with the ideology, and we sway them, not only are we doing something good for these individuals, first of all, but we are also really helping law enforcement to focus, to zero in on the really bad guys.

So it needs to be done in the right way, and I think there should be some kind of legislative intervention there in setting how the rules of the game should be. And, of course, there should be participation with the law enforcement community in that, and then getting communities involved.

Senator ERNST. Do you think that we would have good participation from non-governmental agencies here in the United States, organizations that would step forward and be able to fill that role? And, Ms. Mirahmadi, I would love to hear your take on that as well, please.

Mr. VIDINO. Yes, I think, first of all, one should have civil society involved in general, and I think Hedieh can give a practical example of how that is done. But I think that the local level is also crucial when it comes to government. I think that it has to be done at the county level and at the State level. These are the people who, more than the FBI, really have the pulse of the community. And to some degree, they are seen not as the bad guys, as the FBI would be. Obviously, there is a role for the FBI for sure there, but I think that it is local law enforcement, health departments, and a variety of entities at the local level that are critical in getting the communities to be involved.

I think that we have seen a bit of pushback from communities, but I think that it comes from some self-appointed leaders of the community. So there are big parts of the community that do want to help, do want to work with government, because they understand that the problem is targeting their own children. So one has to be really clear about how diverse the community is and who they will find as partners.

Senator ERNST. OK. Ms. Mirahmadi, if you would, please.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. I absolutely agree with what Lorenzo mentioned in terms of legal guidelines. So we do run one of the first intervention/prevention programs on violent extremism in the country, and it is difficult, risky, and complicated, but that does not mean that we cannot navigate our way through it. We are able to operate completely outside of the purview of law enforcement until there is an imminent threat or some national security risk. So there is a way to develop a program that protects client health information, and then when it goes to a case of radicalization, or when the FBI or the police department would want to refer a case, you could follow the rules of informed consent and balance those interests with our national security concerns.

And I would just like to say that as long as the FBI continues to have jurisdiction on those cases, as unpopular as it may be to some people, they need to be part of that process, because, at the end of the road, they will be involved if those cases go south. So it is important to have a balance between the community being able to stay within its purview and protect the client information and then still have a relationship with the Bureau when it is something beyond their control.

Senator ERNST. OK. Is this reflective of what the Europeans have done? What are the greatest takeaways that we can learn from what their governments have done?

Ms. MIRAHMADI. As Lorenzo mentioned, there are many different kinds of models. So in Europe, a lot of them are led by government

channels in the U.K. In my opinion, you should do both. We can have community-led programs and rectify inconsistencies in the process. In other words, if you do not follow a systematic approach, some dangerous people may be missed. For some, there is this hesitation to deal with law enforcement too closely so that they can do only prevention work.

So I think that you can set up diversion programs, like we do in a lot of other violence prevention programs, that are in partnership with law enforcement. And then separately you could have prevention/intervention programs that are largely community run.

Senator ERNST. OK, great. Wonderful. Well, I thank you very much for your input. It is something that we really do need to tackle.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Ayotte.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR AYOTTE

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to follow up on your report, Dr. Vidino, and ask you about the aspect of it where you noted that there is a largely untapped opportunity to leverage American ISIS recruits that have become disillusioned with the cause, and that these individuals have dropped out for a variety of reasons, whether experiencing the brutality of life under ISIS firsthand or finding a more positive outlet for the quest that led them to ISIS in the first place. You noted that we would do well to provide avenues for their stories to be amplified to help dissuade would-be recruits.

Could you explain that to us and just let us know, first of all, how many Americans do you think that would constitute? I am just curious. And, what are the reasons they have become disillusioned? And how could we use them to help us get at this issue?

And then I am going to ask a dual question to all of you after that. How do we get the message out as to what life is like for women in ISIS? Because as I understand it, the way that they are portraying the role of women in how they are marketing it is quite different than the reality of being engaged with ISIS or obviously traveling to Iraq and Syria and joining up with the caliphate if you are a woman.

So, Dr. Vidino, I am going to have you address the American issue, and then if people could jump in on women and how ISIS treats women, I would appreciate it.

Mr. VIDINO. OK. Thank you for your question, Senator. What we advocate—and, again, this is an idea that has been floating around in the Department of Justice (DOJ) and in other quarters—is the idea that, as we said earlier, there is a very powerful message that can be sent by people who are part of ISIS or, in general, the jihadist movement. I think that you are right that we are probably going to have some difficulties in finding a lot of Americans who have left ISIS. It is not really public information, but I would argue that there probably are some very isolated cases that you would find. We can definitely find more people who were al-Qaeda-linked, or anyway, jihadists. We have a whole wave of people who are coming out of prison now. These are the people who were sort of arrested post-9/11, sort of the second-tier guys, the people who did

not go to fight, mostly the people who were convicted for material support and got between 10 and 15 years, and who are coming out of prison now.

There is really no de-radicalization program in the U.S. prison system, but some of these people are coming out de-radicalized on their own, reformed. That is a very powerful message. We go back to—it is a message, but it is also the messenger. The legitimacy that somebody that has maybe served time in jail, maybe even went to Afghanistan or to Yemen, and can come back and say, “Listen, the stories that we were fed are lies. The reality is completely different,” that messenger is so much more powerful than the countless books the four of us can write here.

So we argue that in some cases, whether it is people coming out of prison, whether it is people who, in one way or the other, are living in the States, or, even better in my opinion, if we have people coming back from ISIS—obviously if they have committed crimes, nobody argues that participation should be a way to get away with not being prosecuted and not being held responsible for what they did. But since we know that there are sort of borderline cases, with the proper considerations, I think that there is such a powerful countermessaging tool there that should be used. It is sort of a gutsy, alternative way of dealing with the problem, but I think that we do need new solutions and I think that this is an important one. Definitely we have some of those that come from the “old guard,” let us put it like that, the al-Qaeda people who were active 4 or 5 years ago, and I think that is very powerful.

Senator AYOTTE. Who would like to go first in addressing how they are recruiting women, the reality versus—how we get that message out to women in particular?

Ms. MIRAHMADI. I think that as Lorenzo and Dr. Stern have both brought up, the issue of using formers could be a very powerful tool. But I would also like to posit that oftentimes a lot of these—the would-be recruits are very skeptical of messages that come from a former, because it is what they consider to be propaganda against the caliphate. So it would also be valuable to think of not only what we are against, but also what we actually stand for. So not just telling girls why they should not go, but also telling them why they should stay. And I think that it requires—whether it is a Muslim mentor or some other kind of social network that gives them a motivation for saying, “I am Muslim, but I am also British or I am also American, and this is my country. I feel part of it and I have a faith that provides me with the spiritual and the intellectual needs that I have.” I think that is a much more complicated question, but it is definitely something that we need to get to, because we need a positive message not just a countermessaging.

Senator AYOTTE. Am I missing something? And maybe I am wrong about this, but I thought that they were misrepresenting to women what the reality was. And maybe I am wrong about that. I just would like to understand—

Ms. MIRAHMADI. No, what I mean is that they do not believe it when we say women are mistreated.

Senator AYOTTE. OK. I understand.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. So when we say, “They treat you terribly. They make you wear a burqa. You do not ever get to go out. They do

not feed you.” Their response is, “You are lying. You are making that up.”

Senator AYOTTE. Oh, they think that we are misrepresenting it.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Yes.

Senator AYOTTE. Professor.

Ms. STERN. Here I think it is important to highlight the work of a woman, Humera Khan, who is working one-on-one with young people, and particularly young women, who believe this narrative. I think that this kind of work really needs to be supported. Of course they are lying. They are saying, “You get to be a jihadi wife.” They do not say, “You get to be a jihadi wife one month with one guy and one month with the next—or maybe one day.”

Yes, we need to get those stories out, but I think that the one-on-one approach that Humera Khan is involved in is very useful. That is what I will say.

Mr. HAYKEL. The recruitment to ISIS provides meaning and structure to individuals. I do not think that it is gendered. I think that women are as attracted as men to the meaning and structure that ISIS provides when they are recruited. And ISIS, itself, is extremely adept in its propaganda and using women in its propaganda. So you see this in their online magazines, but also, for instance, one of their principal ideologues today, one of their principal thinkers who is writing poetry and treatises on Islam, is a woman. Her name is Ahlam al-Nasr. And they have a brigade of female morality police that roams the streets.

So, the way that they present themselves to the outside world and to potential recruits is that this is a terrific place and women can lead meaningful lives and also produce the next generation of fighters, which is a duty for Islam as a religion, and for the caliphate itself.

Unfortunately, the testimony of former slaves—so I am here thinking about someone called Nadia Murad, who is an amazing woman, a Yazidi who was enslaved and testified at the United Nations (U.N.) and also has given many interviews. If you listen to her, I mean, tears well up in your eyes. But it has had almost no effect, as far as I can tell, throughout the Arab world, because she is “othered.” She is seen as something outside of the community, and sometimes she is not even believed. They think that this is disinformation against the caliphate.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Let me quickly pick up on that point because it ties in—I have three questions left. Dr. Mirahmadi, you talked about the need for basically a reverse Wahhabism process or project. They are not believing—I have met with young Yazidi women as well, and you are right, the treatment of them is horrific. How far along in that reverse process are we? I think I know, but I want to hear it from you.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Not very far along.

Chairman JOHNSON. We are a long ways.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. We are long ways, but I think that it is to the point that Dr. Stern mentioned about not really believing what our problem is. We are just kind of throwing a lot of things at it and being, like, well, if we just do this, then it will go away, if we just

do that, then it will go away. I have been doing this for 20 years. It is not going away.

Chairman JOHNSON. No. This is a long-term process.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Yes.

Chairman JOHNSON. It is a tough, long slog.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Right, exactly. And, also, we have to get over the issue of our trepidation in dealing with religion. So once we can overcome these two aspects and really confront what we are up against and then not be afraid of invoking religion when it could be helpful to our mutual causes, Muslim and non-Muslim, a whole lot of other tools will open up to us.

Chairman JOHNSON. Obviously, that was the purpose of this hearing, to lay out a reality. Even if we do not like it, we do not want to face it, it is the only way to solve a problem. First, define it properly and then admit that you have one.

Dr. Haykel, can we just get back to some basics? Because I really think that this is very confusing to most Americans. Why do Sunnis want to kill Shia and vice versa? Can you just describe the Sunni-Shia split within Islam?

Mr. HAYKEL. Well, it is a split that dates back 1,400 years to the time when, after the death of the Prophet, there was a difference of opinion over succession, over who was to succeed the Prophet. And the majority went one way and the minority went the other way. The majority are the Sunnis; the minority are the Shiites.

Now, over time, this sectarian split—you can think of it as Catholic versus Protestant. It was not actually mobilized for military purposes or for sectarian wars. It is only evident historically, and today, when States, when governments, choose to use this form of identity, form of religious identity, for very specific purposes, typically geostrategic purposes and to achieve goals that States want to achieve. So you see the Saudis—

Chairman JOHNSON. What was the first instance of States using this split to go to war with each other?

Mr. HAYKEL. Well, the most prominent one in pre-modern times was when the Ottomans fought the Safavids. The Ottomans were based in Turkey, and the Safavids were based in Iran. And they used this difference in religion to fight one another. Today we see it in the fight between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

But I think one has to dig deeper than just the sectarian—I mean, the sectarian language gives cover for what is otherwise a battle over power.

Chairman JOHNSON. And then even within the Shia-Sunni, there are factions within those groups as well, which is, again, even more confusing. Sunni governments obviously want to destroy ISIS because ISIS wants to destroy them. They are all basically kind of Sunni-based, correct?

Mr. HAYKEL. That is correct. There are divisions within it, and my advice to the U.S. Government is not to enter into the fray of these sectarian wars, because we should not take sides, for one, and, two, I do not think, again, that we have standing to decide what is and what is not correct, Islamically. I think that we should be very hard-nosed about what our interests are and pursue those relentlessly.

Chairman JOHNSON. And what are those interests then? Again, we want to defeat ISIS.

Mr. HAYKEL. Right.

Chairman JOHNSON. In order to do that, from my standpoint—this is kind of my third question, too—we need to develop what I have been calling a “committed coalition of the willing.” I often use the model of the First Gulf War where literally our coalition partners supplied 240,000 troops to that effort, paid for about 85 percent of it. Now, that is a committed coalition of the willing. But today we need a committed coalition of Sunni Arab States, correct? Because of the history, because we bugged out, and because we have had some problems. Can you just describe the lack of confidence, from your perspective, of the Sunni States right now in American leadership and why they might be reluctant to join this coalition?

Mr. HAYKEL. The principal reason that Sunni States are not fully joining this coalition is because they do not regard ISIS as the principal enemy that they are facing. So the Saudis, for instance, would think that Iran is much more dangerous. The Turks think that the Kurds are much more dangerous. And, frankly, Iran itself is playing a double game, in that it is both convenient for ISIS to exist there because it keeps the Sunni world in disarray, and it creates an enemy that is convenient for the Iranians, and it brings the West on to their side with Assad and to side with Iran.

So, this is a part of the world where, what is really happening is not obvious, and one cannot have any illusions, because all of these States use forces, these forces like ISIS, for their own purposes.

Chairman JOHNSON. So I would like to give you the opportunity to just go through that in a little greater detail, I guess starting with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, and just really describing in detail what their aims are, who they are concerned about, who their true enemy is, and who their corollary enemy is because, again, it is incredibly complex. Can you just step through that again in greater detail?

Mr. HAYKEL. Sure, and I will in a thumbnail—

Chairman JOHNSON. Again, kind of talking about their strategic goals and aims.

Mr. HAYKEL. The Saudis basically want to reverse Iranian influence throughout the Arab world. They consider Iran’s projection of power, especially through non-State actors like Hezbollah and the militias of southern Iraq, to be unacceptable, and they want to roll it back because they want to dominate that region. They consider the region to be Arab, and they consider themselves to be the dominant power in that—

Chairman JOHNSON. And what was their goal in terms of the Wahhabism schools and setting all of that up?

Mr. HAYKEL. Actually, the Saudis were never involved in setting up Wahhabism in either Iraq or Syria, because the regimes in those two countries, authoritarian regimes, would not permit the Saudis to do this. So the conversion of the Sunnis of Syria and Iraq to Salafism is a very recent thing, and it is—I think that there are reasons for why they are doing this, why the Sunnis are becoming Salafists. I think that it has to do with power again.

Chairman JOHNSON. So maybe not there, but they spread Wahhabism—

Mr. HAYKEL. They spread Wahhabism throughout the world.

Chairman JOHNSON. And their aim in doing that was what?

Mr. HAYKEL. Well, actually, it was largely to fight against Communism, Arab socialism, and Arab nationalism. They were threatened by a form of politics that was deeply destabilizing to monarchical rule, so they spread an Islamic solidarity, Islamic identity movement and campaign, beginning in the early 1960s, largely and often in coordination with us, actually.

Chairman JOHNSON. So to really protect the House of Saud.

Mr. HAYKEL. Correct.

Chairman JOHNSON. OK. So there is encapsulated Saudi Arabia.

Mr. HAYKEL. Yes.

Chairman JOHNSON. Move on to Iran, then.

Mr. HAYKEL. So Iran basically has yet to decide whether it is a normal country or a revolution, and inasmuch as the hard-liners in Iran still believe in the revolution, they want to project the power of Iran, militarily, but also soft power, revolutionary power, through proxies, from the Palestinian territories all the way—

Chairman JOHNSON. So describe that in detail, because everybody talks about how they are recognized as the largest State sponsor of terror. Describe that. Describe the groups that they are supporting and why they are doing it.

Mr. HAYKEL. Right. So they support certain factions amongst the Palestinians. Hamas, for a while, was on their payroll, and there is another faction in Gaza that is with—Islamic jihad that is with Iran. In Lebanon, they have Hezbollah. They have a number of militias in southern Iraq. They support the Assad regime and also a number of militias that are fighting with the Assad regime.

As far as the Middle East is concerned, by far, the most destabilizing country has been Iran. The Assad regime, for instance, which would not have survived without Iranian backing, has killed close to 300,000 people and has made 11 million people displaced as refugees. So, ISIS actually pales in comparison with Iran, in terms of instability in the region.

Chairman JOHNSON. What about Turkey?

Mr. HAYKEL. Turkey is an interesting country inasmuch as it has been cut off from the Middle East for some 80 years, and it has rediscovered the Middle East and thought that it, as a successful country, could dominate it through soft power. Turkey has quickly realized that the Middle East is much more complicated, and they thought, I think, until recently, that ISIS could be contained. And then ISIS started a suicide bombing campaign against the Turks. So the pipeline of recruits has shut down as a result of this. But Turkey still remains in an old model of thinking about the world. For them, the Kurds remain the most dangerous element because they represent 20 percent of the Turkish population and could potentially secede from the country.

Chairman JOHNSON. Can you talk about the difference within the Kurdish population between those in Turkey, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and the Iraqi Kurds?

Mr. HAYKEL. I mean, there are differences certainly between them politically, but on the whole, I would think of the Kurds as

an American—as natural allies for us, especially those in Syria and in Iraq. They are a long-suffering population. They have really suffered and have never had their own country. And you can think of them almost like Israel, as a group of people that will always be a natural ally of the United States in the region.

Chairman JOHNSON. OK. Does anybody else want to feed into this line of questioning? Seeing Senator Booker has been faithful in sticking around, I will let you have a couple of extra questions as well. But does anybody else want to comment on this?

[No response.]

Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much. I appreciate your patience and the indulgence of the Chairman.

I just have really one last line of questioning, and it really goes to this experience that I had 2 weeks ago when I was in the Middle East—I was in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—and sat down with Saudi Arabian leaders, many of them women and activists, and sat down with others in Turkey, from Erawan to just individuals I met on my way there. And I was sort of surprised at how much they were concerned that this Nation, America, was turning anti-Islamist. Do we hate Muslims? And I found myself having to explain that that was not our stance and actually get very strong in reasserting or reaffirming the pluralistic society in which we live, the loving and tolerant society in which we live.

I guess my question for all of you is really, there seems to be this counterbacklash, as I try to observe it, over this alleged political correctness and how this country talks about Islam, about how this country talks about the terrorism that we are seeing. And I am wondering, basically, does language really matter and how we frame this to the rest of the world. Some of the comments that we have, some of the comments many people believe is demagoguery, is that hurting our ability—because I am about winning. Is it hurting our ability to deal with the ISIS threat and how we are characterizing it or how some of the characterizations have been out there. I think this is important coming from specialists like you, for me at least, to help understand American rhetoric and what we are seeing in the media by political candidates, as well as elected Senators. Anybody?

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Absolutely it does hurt. It does hurt our ability to win. And I think it is because—

Senator BOOKER. So you are saying it hurts our ability to win in the battle against ISIS.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Absolutely. Vilifying all of Islam and Muslims of course will hurt us. So talking about not letting Muslims into the country anymore or that Islam is the problem will alienate 1.2 billion people for sure.

But that does not mean that we cannot have a rational and intelligent conversation about what the threat is. So if you had asked me 5 years ago, I would have told you that I advocated calling it “radical Islamism,” and I used the word “Islamism” to make a distinction between that and mainstream Islam. The problem is that it has metastasized so badly with ISIS that there is only a sliver of theology left on top now, and there are all these other counter-cultural, anti-social components to what is radicalizing individuals.

But at the end of the day, there is this kind of long-term problem with warped, deviant interpretations of Islam constantly being used to galvanize violence. And I think that there is something to be said for what are we going to do about that element of the problem. And I think that the President's call to the Muslim community, "We ask you to stand up, we ask you to talk to your Imams, and to take responsibility," was very important, because there is a piece of this that belongs to the Muslim community. I have a number of theories on why it has taken so long to speak up against it, but the fact is that there is a piece of this that belongs to the community, and I think that we need to do that together. But that requires us having a rational conversation about the subject.

Senator BOOKER. And so you said that you used to call it "radical Islamism."

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Right.

Senator BOOKER. What do you call it now?

Ms. MIRAHMADI. "Violent extremism."

Senator BOOKER. "Violent extremism."

Ms. MIRAHMADI. I mean, for a number of reasons: one, because it is so politically incorrect to call it anything else, and—

Senator BOOKER. But I am not worried about political correctness. I am worried about winning against ISIS. And so you are saying that it is not politically correct, but you are also saying that it is damaging, right?

Ms. MIRAHMADI. It is damaging because people do not like the association—Muslims do not like the association of Islam with this problem.

Senator BOOKER. And so for that 27-year-old, it is alienating, it is further isolating, and in many ways adds to the climate in which people could be radicalized. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. MIRAHMADI. I do not know if that term does that to him.

Senator BOOKER. Right.

Ms. MIRAHMADI. It is the feelings people have against Islam and Muslims. So I do not know if it is the term that would do it or just the way that our society is responding. So the bullying in schools, for example, a number of our clients, the young people who are the most vulnerable, are the ones that are getting constantly harassed in school, called "towel head," "terrorist," or "Osama." They are just maladapting. And so that is causing fissures in our communities across the country. There needs to be work done at the grassroots level, at the local level, to repair those fissures.

Senator BOOKER. So seemingly innocent semantics coming from high-level leaders helps to drive intolerance? Is that—

Ms. MIRAHMADI. Well, if you talk about banning all Muslims, yes. There is a range, right? There is a difference between addressing radical Islamism as a component of the problem and banning all Muslims. There is a spectrum of terminology that could be used, but, a large representation of the Muslim community now do not like "violent extremism" either because they think that it is code for "Muslim."

So I think that even though we try to avoid using certain terminology, we are still in the same place that we were before by fighting over terminology, rather than solving the problem.

Senator BOOKER. Would anybody else like to offer thoughts on that?

Ms. STERN. I think that it is important to remember that the primary victims of this ideology are Muslim, and I think that some of the primary victims are the mothers of the kids who are getting seduced, basically to commit suicide, in somebody else's losing war in another country. I think that hate speech right now is extremely dangerous, and I agree with you that certain political leaders who are indulging themselves in hate speech are really damaging our ability to fight this threat.

Senator BOOKER. But do you think—you are not saying, obviously, that a term like “radical Islam” is hate speech. People using terminology like that, that is not problematic to you, right?

Ms. STERN. Not for me. I mean, I think that the President's discomfort with calling this “violent Islamist terrorism”—I understand why, but I do not agree. I mean, that is what it is. And the vast majority of Muslims do not agree with that ideology and are petrified—some parents are petrified that their kids might, in this process of growing up and of rebelling against their parents, be drawn to that ideology.

Senator BOOKER. And so political leaders who say “violent Islamic radicalism” or “violent Islamic extremism,” that does no damage, in your opinion?

Ms. STERN. That does not trouble me, but saying that we cannot allow Muslims to come into this country, that troubles me a lot.

Senator BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. STERN. Very dangerous.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Vidino, you seemed like you wanted to say something?

Mr. VIDINO. Just very briefly. I think that there are two levels of the conversation here. One is what public leaders say. I understand, to some degree, the trepidation when a President makes an address and the whole world is listening. I understand that there is a level of defensiveness, in Muslim communities and in allied countries, to any kind of statement that can, to some degree, associate Islam with violence. So the debate is much more open. When you go to Muslim majority countries, they talk about political Islam very freely among themselves.

Senator BOOKER. Right.

Mr. VIDINO. But if somebody else that is non-Muslim, from outside, calls it “political Islam,” immediately you get a sense of defensiveness, which is completely understandable.

Senator BOOKER. As a black guy—

Mr. VIDINO. What I am saying is that—

Senator BOOKER [continuing]. I would not understand what you are talking about, words used by blacks that cannot be used by—
[Laughter.]

Mr. VIDINO. I guess to some degree. [Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. I would not understand.

Mr. VIDINO. What I am saying is also that there are two levels. So I understand why, at a level of the President or, anyways, elected leaders or political leaders in general, that there should be—people should be very careful about the terms that they use. Sometimes a little bit of carefulness is metastasized into a paralysis in—

ternally, where we do not talk about religion out of political correctness, and what could be, for example, debates within the administration and finding solutions, to some degree political correctness has blinded us, and we look at all other aspects which are indeed important and should be looked at, but we ignore the one that is religious.

Senator BOOKER. That is a very good point.

Mr. VIDINO. Which is one of the components.

Senator BOOKER. That is a very good point.

Do you want to add anything to close it out at all? Being from Jersey, I would like for you to have the last word. [Laughter.]

Mr. HAYKEL. Thank you. I definitely think that there is an Islamic genealogy to this group. The problem is that when you enter into the specifics, it gets very complicated, and for public discourse, it is better to be prudential and careful in how you use the term "Islam." So I understand where the President is coming from. I do think, though, that an honest discussion about this problem has to involve how this group is using Islam for its purposes and where it is drawing its inspiration from.

I would also like to end by saying that there are bound to be more attacks in the United States like the ones that we have seen already, unfortunately, and this is where we have to be super vigilant in how we respond, because the temptation will be to vilify the entire community of Muslims. And that is where I think that we have to not play into the narrative of ISIS, because that is exactly what they would want us to do.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you for those wise words.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Booker.

I will tell you, as a Protestant Lutheran, if there is a radical band of Lutherans committing terrorist attack after terrorist attack, I would call them, "Lutheran terrorists," and I would denounce them, and I would renounce them. I think that is part of the problem. The truth is the truth, reality is reality, and this strain, which we will all admit is a small percentage, has to be defeated.

So, again, I just want to thank Senator Booker—

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Chairman, could we have a hearing on Lutheran terrorists, please? [Laughter.]

Chairman JOHNSON. I am not aware that it is a problem. Prove to me that it is a problem, and we will have a hearing.

Again, I just want to thank all of the witnesses and all of the Senators who came here. We had great attendance and excellent questions. I think that we did lay out some of the reality here. I think that we helped to further define the problem, and it is incredibly complex, and it is going to be a long-term project trying to solve it.

With that, the hearing record will remain open for 15 days until February 4th at 5 p.m. for the submission of statements and questions for the record.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:03 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Opening Statement for Chairman Ron Johnson “Inside The Mind Of ISIS: Understanding Its Goals And Ideology To Better Protect The Homeland”

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

As submitted for the record:

Good morning and welcome.

Last month, 14 Americans were killed and 22 were seriously injured in San Bernardino, California, by two terrorists who claimed allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. This barbaric attack demonstrated the serious threat that Islamic terrorists pose to our nation.

Over recent months, ISIS has been linked to a series of deadly attacks across the globe, including the downing of a Russian airliner over Egypt, the mass slaughter in Paris, and killings in Lebanon, Turkey and most recently Indonesia. In 2015, United States authorities reported a record number of terrorism-related arrests, the most since 2001.

It is clear that our nation—and the entire world—are facing a serious threat from militant extremists who act on behalf of ISIS and other Islamic terrorists.

As chairman, my top priority for this committee for 2016 is help ensure that the federal government is fulfilling its responsibility to do everything it can to keep our nation safe and protect the American people. To that end, this is the first of a series of hearings that we will hold this year to examine the threat posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, otherwise known as Daesh.

We will examine what the United States government is doing at home and abroad to prevent atrocities like the one perpetrated in San Bernardino. We will call on federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice, to learn what is working and what we can do better to protect the American people. And where necessary, I will ask my colleagues on this committee to join me in bipartisan reforms to strengthen our nation's security.

To grasp the full dimension of this threat, we must first examine the root causes that fuel Islamic terrorism. We must understand our adversary—its ideology, its motivations, its ultimate goal, and its strategy for gaining and sustaining the power necessary to achieve that goal.

We are fortunate to have leading experts with us today who have studied ISIS to help us better understand the threat. I would like to thank each of our witnesses for joining us today, and I look forward to your testimony.

Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“Inside The Mind Of ISIS: Understanding Its Goals And Ideology To Better Protect The
Homeland”

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

One of the most important jobs of our federal Government is to keep our people safe.

As the Paris and San Bernardino terror attacks showed us, ISIS and ISIS-inspired attacks remain a major threat. In fact, just last week, ISIS carried out attacks against U.S. allies in Turkey and Indonesia.

Today, we will look at ISIS's ideology and how it hopes to achieve its goals. One of ISIS's key strengths is its large number of recruits. Despite the heavy losses inflicted on ISIS by coalition forces, the number of ISIS fighters on the ground in Iraq and Syria remains steady thanks to a stream of new recruits flowing into the region each month.

ISIS also appears to have a significant online army that grows by the day. These 'virtual' soldiers may never set foot in the territory ISIS controls, but they are waging an aggressive social media campaign that calls on people to do the group's bidding from thousands of miles away. These battlefield recruits and online-supporters are attracted not only to ISIS's ideology but to its image, as well.

What is that image? It is one of a winner. Even as it suffers serious defeats on the battlefield and loses key leaders, ISIS still projects an image of indestructability. They do this through fictitious claims and propaganda on social media, and also by ignoring the truth about the progress coalition forces are making. This winner message appeals to many young men who crave fame, fortune, love, and increased social standing.

Just as troubling is the fact that ISIS has successfully advanced a twisted narrative that the United States is at war with Islam and that it's the duty of young Muslims to defend their religion by attacking the United States and our allies.

But nothing, let me repeat that, nothing could be further from the truth.

Let me be clear: this battle is against ISIS, plain and simple. ISIS is a cowardly group of murderers who kill Muslims, Jews and Christians alike. They have no regard for human life. The estimated 30,000 ISIS fighters have nothing to do with the 1.5 billion Muslim men and women who peacefully practice their religion around the world and in our communities.

At the end of the day, this battle against ISIS is a war of words and ideas as much as it a war of military power and action. That's why it is so important that we not only continue to crush ISIS on the battlefield but also counter their hateful message.

To this end, last month, I introduced legislation that would create an office at the Department of Homeland Security to counter the violent messages of ISIS and other terror groups. I welcome all my colleagues to join me on this important piece of legislation.

This fight against ISIS, however, is not solely the responsibility of DHS or any other federal agency. We all have a role to play. We have an obligation to say something if we something suspicious.

And we all – especially those of us in public office – have a responsibility to be mindful of the words we use when we talk about Islam and the 1.5 billion Muslims around the world who practice their religion peacefully. We must work to ensure that the rhetoric we use does not play into the hands of ISIS.

When we make careless comments about the nature of Islam or the need to keep Muslims out of the United States for political purposes, we feed ISIS's narrative that the United States is at war with Muslims.

We are smarter than that. Our country is better than that. We do not need to engage in demagoguery or run from our moral obligations in order to keep Americans safe.

I look forward to learning more today about ISIS's ideology and tactics and what more we can do to address the root causes of this difficult challenge.

Our thanks to you, the witnesses, for being here. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

The History and Ideology of the Islamic State

Bernard Haykel
Professor of Near Eastern Studies
Princeton University

Statement prepared for the U.S. Senate hearing titled “Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding Its Goals and Ideology to Better Protect the Homeland” on January 20, 2016

In 2015 a debate raged in policy and academic circles about whether it is appropriate to use the adjective “Islamic” when referring to the Islamic State and other militant jihadist groups like al-Qaeda. This polemic is centered on President Obama’s unwillingness to use the word Islam in any form when discussing these groups. He does not want to dignify them, or their claims, by an association with the religion of Islam and the great civilization it fostered. Instead, the term of art for jihadists in Washington is “violent extremists,” and the policy against groups like the Islamic State is called “countering violent extremism” or “CVE.” While this label is inelegant, the White House has made what appears to be a prudential policy decision on how to contend with the jihadist phenomenon. It does not wish to offend Muslims, and even hopes to galvanize them to join the policy of CVE. After all, the overwhelming majority of Muslims does not agree with the Islamic State’s ideology and views its ideologues and fighters as misguided and perverting both the message and image of the faith.

As a scholar of Islamic studies, my role—unlike that of the policy-driven politician—is to study groups like the Islamic State, to trace their claims historically and to explain their ideology and rise. To do so, it is important to see in what ways the Islamic State is tied to the history of Islamic theology and law, how it cites texts of revelation, and how it selectively appropriates and refashions the tradition of Islam for its political purposes. In addition, it is equally important to study the political, economic, and social context in which this jihadist group emerged. In other words, to ignore the Islamic background and content of the Islamic State’s ideology or the material factors that led to its rise is to fail in the scholarly enterprise and to fall short in providing the policy maker, the student, *and* the public with an adequate understanding of the global phenomenon of jihadism.

So who are the jihadists of the Islamic State, what do they believe in, how and why did they emerge, and what do they want to achieve?

The Islamic State is a Jihadi-Salafi movement, which means that its members adhere to a strict literalist interpretation of the texts of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. They privilege armed struggle (*jihad*) as a means for implementing their austere, intolerant, and muscular vision of Islam. Salafis—not all of whom preach armed violence; only the Jihadi-Salafis do—have been an influential minority sect throughout the history of Islam. In pre-modern times, Salafis were associated with populist movements, as when some of their scholars were rabble-rousers in 10th-century Baghdad or when in 18th-century central Arabia they led a revivalist movement better known as

Wahhabism (named after the founder of the movement, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who died in 1792).

Modern Salafis often claim that ordinary lay Muslims, whether in the past or the present, have beliefs and practices that are closer to a Salafi conception of the faith because of its “simplicity” and its attachment to a textual literalism that conforms with an “authentic” or “original” Islam. Much of Salafism’s appeal lies in such assertions, and those searching for a locus of religious identity in our disenchanted modern world find a fully packaged version of the faith here. This claim, however, is not true on a number of counts, one of which is that in numerical terms most Muslims in pre-modern times were not Salafis; rather, they belonged to such traditional schools of law as Hanafism and were greatly influenced by Sufism—a mystical form of the faith at odds with Salafism—and the cult of dead saints associated with the Sufis. It is nonetheless true that in modern times, Sufism has declined considerably throughout the Islamic world and Salafism does indeed appear to enjoy widespread appeal. What explains this rupture with the past?

Salafism’s ideology and worldview has come to the fore in modern times for a variety of reasons. Some of these have to do with the decline in stature of traditional institutions of religious authority as well as the spread of mass literacy and the personal desire of those not trained rigorously in the religious tradition to engage directly with the texts of revelation. Also, an urban middle class has arisen with particular expectations and desires, such as a personal sense of autonomy and a refusal to accept traditional hierarchies of learning and social status. (In this respect, what we see happening in the Islamic world is similar, though by no means identical, to the Protestant Reformation in Europe.) Finally, the funding of religious education by Salafi petro-states like Saudi Arabia has globally spread this literalist and textualist version of the faith.

Some have argued that petro-dollar financing alone explains the rise of Salafism, and if this funding tap was closed, the phenomenon would dissipate. While no doubt important, Saudi Arabia’s funding is not a sufficient explanation for this religious revival, nor can it explain how so many Salafis, especially the jihadists among them, are virulent enemies of the kingdom. The blame attached to Saudi Arabia provides an overly simplistic narrative. The spread of Salafi teachings is rooted more in the needs and anxieties of modern Muslims—for greater religious certainty, for example—as well as with the emergence of new forms of authority, than in who is funding what. Moreover, people do not change their core beliefs and traditions purely for pecuniary reasons, and more is surely at stake when this takes place. Furthermore, those who posit the transactional model of Saudi funding for religious change never account for those who take the money but refuse to change or convert. Yemen, for instance, provides many examples of this phenomenon when people have accepted Saudi funding without changing their religious or political orientations.

Salafis principally target other Muslims for not following their version of Islam. They accuse their enemies of corrupting the faith with beliefs and practices that violate the doctrine of the oneness of God by associating other beings or things with Him. Many Muslims, Salafis argue, have become feeble because they have deviated into error and

lost the “true” message of the faith. Their grievance is about theological issues and the need for reform, but this quickly acquires a political and militant dimension with the Jihadis who are frustrated with the inability to effect change through nonviolent means.

Jihadi-Salafis adhere to an activist doctrine in which they show loyalty toward fellow brethren in the faith and exhibit enmity and militant hatred toward the unbelievers—this is called in Arabic *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*. As a consequence of this, Shia and Sufi Muslims tend to be vilified by Jihadi-Salafis as unbelievers and often suffer violence. Of course, any self-proclaimed Muslim who supports democracy or a system of government Jihadi-Salafis deem to be un-Islamic is equally condemned as an unbeliever. To make their arguments, Jihadi-Salafis cite the most violent verses in the Quran and Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, and they also draw selectively on a pre-modern legacy of textual sources and methods of interpretation. By far the most important authority for them is the medieval Syrian scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), whose oeuvre represents an ideological bulwark against non-Salafi heresies. Yet, it must be stressed that Ibn Taymiyyah's teachings were more sophisticated and nuanced than the teachings of those who claim to be his modern heirs in the jihadi community.

In the realm of politics, the Jihadi-Salafis condemn in categorical terms the modern world order because its values and principles are not rooted in Islam but rather in the infidel West. More specifically, according to them, the modern world has stripped God of His sovereignty as the sole lawgiver and also weakened Muslims by dividing them into territorial states whereby citizenship, not faith, is the basis for identity and allegiance. To make matters worse, the rulers of these Muslim-majority countries have been co-opted into this system and ultimately serve the interests of the dominant West. These rulers have thus become “apostates” who must be toppled. How to go about this task is a matter of dispute among the Jihadi-Salafis. Some, like al-Qaeda, argue that attacks against the United States—the superpower that supports these regimes—must be undertaken because they will provoke a military response from the U.S. that will ultimately radicalize Muslims. In contrast, the Islamic State favors controlling territory, building a state, and fomenting a civil war between Sunnis and Shia as the path toward a general radicalization and adoption of its ideology. For the Islamic State, the attack on the West is to be indefinitely deferred until victory locally, in the Arab world, has been accomplished. Lone wolf attacks, however, are encouraged by the Islamic State, and these have increased significantly as its military fortunes have declined of late in the Middle East.

The ultimate goal of the Jihadi-Salafis is to make Muslims as powerful as they once were, before the relatively recent dominance of the West over the globe. To do this, it is not sufficient to educate Muslims about the tenets of the faith; one must engage in acts of violence, both individual and collective, against the enemies. Only by terrorizing the enemy, including through the use of suicide bombing and mass slaughter, enslavement, and beheadings, can victory be attained. In addition, recreating the unitary imperial state of the early Islamic period, the caliphate, is deemed important because it can guide and channel the energies of the community and serve as an ideal around which Muslims can rally. This is one reason why the Islamic State declared itself the caliphate immediately after a series of remarkable military victories in Iraq in the summer of 2014.

The ideology described above is on display in countless online treatises and books written by the ideologues of Jihadi-Salafism. On the Internet, there are learned tomes and sermons by scholars such as Turki al-Binali, a 30-year-old prodigy from Bahrain who defends and elaborates the Islamic State's teachings with rhetorical eloquence and flair. Al-Binali's catechism-like treatises on theology and law are taught to all new recruits before military training is undertaken. But this ideology has become more effective and potent, especially at recruitment, because it is associated with what I label the culture of jihad. Unlike al-Qaeda, the Islamic State's supporters are masterful at producing technically sophisticated videos that are then skillfully distributed through social media applications such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. And these are not just gory beheading clips, but include a cappella chants, poetic odes, scenes of battles interspersed with images of medieval knights on horses, clashing swords, and violent video game scenes. Particular favorites are clips from the movie *Kingdom of Heaven* as well as the video games "Assassin's Creed: Revelations," "Call of Duty," and "Grand Theft Auto." Joining the jihad has become cool and means that one can live in a reality that mirrors a virtuous, and sometimes even a virtual, past, which is a contemporary projection of a time full of righteousness, heroism, and justice. This sentiment is evoked by the so-called female poet of the Islamic State, Ahlam al-Nasr:

Islam has become a fortress again; Lofty, firm and great
The banner of God's Oneness is raised anew; it does not bend nor deviate

But no one should be fooled into thinking that the society and state established by the Islamic State is a perfect reproduction of the past, as its ideologues and recruits would want everyone to believe. Many of its practices and beliefs are innovations (e.g., a female-only morality police force) or constitute a distortion in the form of an amalgam of the old and the new (e.g., wantonly destroying archeological sites that represent no threat for the spread of polytheism and idolatry). A question the Islamic State avoids answering is why it should destroy such sites when the virtuous first generation of Muslims, who after all conquered these territories in the 7th century, did not see fit to do so. Finally, much has been made of the apocalyptic or millenarian character of the Islamic State's ideology. The argument is that the Islamic State is a harbinger of the end times in which the Muslims would be ultimately victorious over the forces of evil and unbelief. This aspect of the ideology is used for purely propaganda and recruitment purposes and is not to be taken seriously. A couple of factors guide my thinking here. Why is the Islamic State's English language magazine called *Dabiq*, a place in Syria in which one of the battles of the apocalypse takes place, whereas no such allusions are made so explicitly in its Arabic publications? Also, and more important, why does the Islamic State expend effort and funds in building state institutions, as it has been doing in both Syria and Iraq, when the end is nigh?

Thinking of the Islamic State in purely ideological terms offers only a partial explanation of the jihadist phenomenon in Iraq and Syria. To understand its emergence and appeal, one also has to look at the brutal political, economic, and social realities of the modern Middle East. Perhaps the most important factor in this regard has been the U.S. invasion

of Iraq in 2003. This assault on, and reconfiguration of, Iraq effectively disenfranchised the once dominant Sunnis and imposed a political system in which the majority Shia Arab population became the new masters of the country. Under the leadership of Nouri al-Maliki, the former Shia prime minister from 2006 until 2014, the Iraqi state pursued a sectarian agenda that marginalized and persecuted the Sunnis. In response, the Sunnis became radicalized and turned to the ideology of Jihadi-Salafism, with its virulent anti-Shia stance, as the path for resisting the new political order. The Sunni transformation toward militant Islamism was gradual and was aided by the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, which quickly sowed violence and chaos in neighboring Syria. The Syrian Sunnis—some 70 percent of the country's population—had also been politically marginalized and since 2011 were being brutalized by the Damascus government, which is identified as Shia. The ruling Assad family, and most of its military and intelligence forces, belongs to a Shia sect called the Alawis or Nusayris. The Islamic State represents the merging of significant elements from the Iraqi and Syrian Sunni communities, with the aim of toppling the regimes in Damascus and Baghdad.

There are several other factors that also contribute to the Islamic State's appeal and help it draw recruits from across the Arab world, the source of most of its soldiers. Virtually every Arab country is ruled by a corrupt and unaccountable regime that practices coercion to obtain consent from the governed. These regimes have hollowed out their societies by deliberately destroying most forms of civic association, seeing in these potential sources of organized opposition to their rule. And the population in all Arab countries is very young, often with 60 percent under the age of 30—referred to as the youth bulge. Unemployment rates are high, and merit and competence are rarely rewarded. Obtaining work and advancement is often due to being connected to the right patronage network, a system that is referred as clientelist. The state is often the dominant employer and economic actor in society, and inability to obtain a job in the public sector dooms one to a precarious existence. Without employment, finding a marriage partner becomes very difficult, which delays the possibility of starting a family.

These economic impediments to development, both personal and societal, affect Arab populations that now have access to information through communication technologies such as the Internet and satellite television. Arabs know and see for themselves that other populations, in China or India for example, have it much better. This knowledge generates expectations, but for many individuals, it also causes considerable personal frustration and even hopelessness that they might ever improve their lot in life under the existing political systems. And to make matters even worse, the Arab world has four failed states (Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen) in which all semblance of order has broken down. The Islamic State offers a utopian alternative, and its propaganda trumpets a social order that is just and moral and in which corruption is severely dealt with. A number of videos, for example, display Islamic State soldiers and officials being crucified for stealing.

The phenomenon of the Islamic State is multifaceted and its appeal is not straightforward. Its distinctive interpretation of Islam—the ideology of Jihadi-Salafism—cannot on its own explain its rise and relative success, nor can the political and economic realities of

the Arab world explain it either. Only by adopting multiple perspectives, which combine the ideological and the material, can one begin to understand how and why the Islamic State has risen and what its trajectory might be. Its goals lie beyond Iraq and Syria, inasmuch as its ideologues boastfully claim that world conquest and the establishment of Islamic rule everywhere is their ultimate aim. Its immediate aim is to consolidate power over the territory it now controls and to expand further in Syria and Iraq. Saudi Arabia, however, remains the ultimate prize, and the Islamic State has made no secret of its intentions to conquer the kingdom. Control over the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina, not to mention the country's oil wealth, would go far in confirming the Islamic State's claims about its legitimacy and that it is carrying out God's plan.

The Islamic State will certainly not achieve any such dramatic conquest, and we are now beginning to see it suffer military defeat at the hands of a coalition that includes the U.S., Iraq, and Iran, among other nations. Thus far, it has only been able to take over Sunni-dominated territory and has not defeated either Shia or Kurds on their own ground. As it begins to lose battles and territory, the Islamic State's sheen will quickly fade. What will remain nonetheless are the factors that have allowed it to flourish in the first place, namely an ideology of religious power and domination as well as political, social, and economic realities that provide a wellspring of recruits and supporters who feel deeply disenfranchised and increasingly marginal to the flow of history. Only by addressing seriously these underlying causes and grievances will the phenomenon of jihadism be effectively dealt with. No amount of "countering violent extremism" through the U.S. government's messaging against Islamic State propaganda will turn this violent feature of global politics into a thing of the past.

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Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding their goals and ideology
to better protect the Homeland

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Security and Governmental Affairs, January 20, 2016

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Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, I wish to thank you for inviting me to discuss the question of what ISIS wants. It is an honor to appear before you. I thank you for your efforts to keep the American people safe from harm.

My name is Jessica Stern. I have been researching terrorism since 1988, when I was a doctoral student at Harvard. I recently joined the faculty of Boston University's Pardee School of Global Studies. *I believe that one of the major gaps in our response to ISIS is the lack of investment in developing and disseminating effective counter-narratives that are compelling to the millennial youth who are ISIS's principal targets for recruitment. To do this effectively, we need to listen closely to what ISIS says it wants to achieve, and to what it claims to offer youth.* Next Fall, I will be offering a course called P2P: Challenging Extremism, under the auspices of EdVentures Partners, the State Department and Facebook. This course is quite relevant to the subject of this hearing, in that it provides a pathway for university students in 30 countries (so far) to develop their own counter-narratives and digital responses to ISIS's and other terrorist groups' propaganda. I am proud to be part of this initiative.

My original work at Lawrence Livermore Lab and at the National Security Council was related to controlling terrorists' access to nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. But I got curious about what might motivate individuals to choose to become terrorists. Much of my work over the last twenty years has been based on in-person interviews with terrorists in the field or in prisons. I have studied and spoken with terrorists across religions and ideologies – including Islamist terrorists in Pakistan, Indonesia, Lebanon, and Gaza; Identity Christian and anti-government terrorists in the United States; Jewish terrorists in Israel; and violent Hindu extremists in India. My remarks today will reflect not only what I have learned from ISIS's propaganda, the scholarly literature, and the reporting of courageous journalists, but also the understanding I have acquired as a result of sitting down with young people who made the mistake of joining terrorist organizations.

What Does ISIS Want: Individual Motivations

There are two parts to the question posed by this Committee: What do individuals who join ISIS

want, and what is the aim of the group taken as a whole? If we aim to stop ISIS's recruitment of individuals, we need to address both questions. ISIS members, at different levels of the organization, want many different things, some of them contradictory. And what they hope to achieve from belonging to the organization is likely to change over time. ***Terrorists and their leaders often start out seeking to change the world – in ISIS's case – to maintain and spread its so-called Caliphate, but over time, they may end up seeking fame or fortune more than the group's stated goals.*** This presents a vulnerability that we can exploit. Those living in ISIS-controlled territory are often disenfranchised Sunnis who feel ill-protected by their governments. Local recruits from Iraq and Syria have admitted that working for ISIS was the highest paying job they could find. To such disenfranchised Sunnis, ISIS offers physical protection, free housing, sexual partners, and a sense of purpose. It also offers what it refers to as the only Shari'a based state anywhere on earth.

Foreign volunteers are often drawn by the lure of avenging wrongs visited on the weak by the strong. But jihadis have often told me that they were also seeking adventure and a more glamorous life. Our research at Children's Hospital in Boston on refugee youth suggests that there is a correlation between delinquency, including support for violent extremism; and trauma exposure, social marginalization, and mental-health issues. We have also found that strong social bonds are protective.¹ Ignorance about Islam is hypothesized to make youth more vulnerable to jihadi ideology.

There is undeniable appeal to joining a group that is fired up with righteous indignation. Some people, moved to help others, join political parties, raise money for causes, or try to increase awareness of injustices around the world. Some risk their lives covering war zones as reporters or as physicians healing the sick. But some individuals are willing to kill civilians as part of their holy war against perceived oppression, even though all mainstream religions forbid this. ***Some individuals, sadly, see jihad as a cool way of expressing dissatisfaction with a power elite, whether that elite is real or imagined; whether power is held by totalitarian monarchs or by democratically elected leaders. Many seek redemption from a sense of deep humiliation; while still others may believe they are participating in the lead-up to the End of Times.*** ISIS appears to be deliberately recruiting psychopaths who are attracted to brutality. Because there is such a wide variety of "wants" satisfied by jihadi organizations, prevention and counter-

radicalization programs need to be tailored to individual needs.

ISIS's Collective Goals: Running a Totalitarian state vs. Goad[ing] the West to Invade

According to ISIS propaganda, the group recognizes that its two principal collective goals are in conflict. In the twelfth issue of *Dabiq*, ISIS's on-line magazine, the organization sets forth two principal but contradictory objectives, which it labels "options."ⁱⁱ *The first goal is to spread a totalitarian caliphate throughout the region and, ultimately, the world. The second is to polarize Muslims against one another, to incite internal divisions within the West, and to turn the West against Islam, with the ultimate goal of "goad[ing] the West into launching an all-out ground attack,* thereby setting the scene for the final battle between Muslims and the crusaders prophesized by religious texts to be held at Dabiq in Syria."

Helpfully, ISIS has described for us those steps it regards as necessary to achieve the second option. As an ISIS author—writing under the name of British hostage John Cantlie—observes, *option two would likely require "an operation overseas that is so destructive that America and its allies will have no alternative but to send in an army.* This would have to be something on the scale, if not bigger, than 9/11. Then again I'm just guessing, American 'hawks' may very well come to Dabiq on their own without the Islamic State needing to blow up any dirty bombs in Manhattan."ⁱⁱⁱ

Mohammed al-Adnani, official spokesperson of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has repeatedly urged Muslims to carry out a jihad at home.^{iv} The goal of attacking the West, ISIS says, is to eliminate the "grayzone" of moderate Islam and to force Muslims living in the West to either join ISIS or "apostasize and adopt the kufri religion."^v To date, self-starters, or "lone wolves," have carried out the majority of these attacks with little direction from central leadership. But it was only a matter of time before ISIS would attempt to coordinate attacks outside its territory. Indeed, U.S. and European officials say that Abu Mohammed al-Adnani's role is now to oversee ISIS-directed attacks outside of Iraq and Syria.^{vi}

Finding Labor^{vii}: How ISIS Seduces Personnel With a Promise of Protection and Redemption

Sophisticated attacks outside ISIS-controlled territory require trained fighters, as evidenced in the November 2015 attack in Paris. But such attacks are significantly easier to carry out with operational assistance of local personnel. For ISIS, finding labor is less taxing when they can recruit from an existing pool of disenfranchised Muslims. In examining ISIS recruitment, many of my colleagues have focused on ISIS's "winner's" narrative and the carefully choreographed branding whereby ISIS advertises—and attempts to create—a utopian state.^{viii} This line of argument suggests that ISIS's defense of its territory is critical to its ability to recruit Westerners. But I would suggest that ISIS attempts to create a somewhat different narrative—the redemption of the oppressed.

The narrative of victory most appeals to those who feel they have lost something. And ISIS deliberately appeals to disenfranchised Muslims, as well as to potential converts, around the world; to those—as ISIS puts it—“drowning in oceans of disgrace, being nursed on the milk of humiliation, and being ruled by the vilest of all people.”^{ix} *To those oppressed, ISIS promises the opportunity “to remove the garments of dishonor, and shake off the dust of humiliation and disgrace,* for the era of lamenting and moaning has gone and the dawn of honor has emerged anew.”^x ISIS proclaims, “[t]he sun of jihad has risen.” In the twelfth issue of *Dabiq*, ISIS refers to its followers as “the brothers who have refused to live a life of humiliation.”^{xi}

An essay in *Dabiq* Issue 9 further underscores the promised reversal of fortunes. There, the author admonishes those who conflate having sex with a slave with rape or prostitution and notes that taking slaves through war “is a great prophetic Sunnah [tradition] containing many divine wisdoms and religious benefits, regardless of whether the people are aware of this.” The author gloats that ISIS has established a true caliphate, with “honor and pride for the Muslim and humiliation and degradation for the kaffir (apostates).” The victory ISIS speaks of is the victory of the formerly oppressed.

Civilizational humiliation at the hands of the West is a central theme for jihadists. This narrative of humiliation resonates among some Muslims, who recognize that Islamic civilization was once the greatest on earth. That is no longer the case, and jihadists blame the West. The leader of a Pakistani jihadi group once told me he founded his group because he wanted to reclaim the

golden period of Islam and "to recover what we lost."^{xii} He lamented, "Muslims have been overpowered by the West. Our ego hurts. We are not able to live up to our own standards for ourselves."

There are many reasons why this narrative of humiliation and redemption resonates in the Middle East, socio-political among others. According to a study by the Carnegie Middle East Center, Arab youth are not being adequately prepared to compete in a globalized society. And the Middle East Policy Council finds that labor markets in many Arab states are incapable of producing enough jobs to sustain their growing youth populations.^{xiii} **Poor governance** creates the conditions under which extremist groups thrive and are able to spread their message that the West is responsible for Arab plight. Many economists believe that a "**natural-resource curse**" prevents oil-rich countries from achieving viable democracies.^{xiv} But, as demonstrated by the U.S. attempt to impose Iraqi democracy, democratization is not necessarily the best way to fight Islamic extremism. To the contrary, where there is an absence of institutions to protect minorities, **majoritarian rule can actually lead to an increase in violence**. According to Marwan Muasher, in many cases, people join ISIS not because of its ideology, but rather "because it represents to them a rallying force against establishments that have failed them, or against the West."

Borrowing from the secular anti-colonialist Franz Fanon, jihadi ideologues argue that violence is a way to cure the pernicious effects of centuries of humiliation, and a "cleansing force" that frees an oppressed youth from his "inferiority complex," "despair" and "inaction," and restores his self-respect.^{xv} However, unlike al Qaeda, **ISIS is a populist organization**. It is seeking to seduce anyone and everyone who might be willing to join. *One of the unique features of the group is that it tailors its narrative to individual recruits. But the overarching "victory" narrative, in my view, is meant to seduce those who feel the need to rise up against the oppressors.* I hypothesize that the theme of civilizational humiliation resonates most deeply with individuals who have been subject to extreme trauma and personal humiliations, such as torture, pederasty, and rape. The topic of personal victimization as a risk factor in recruitment is one I hope to explore in future scholarship.

ISIS and the jihadi movement are in some ways similar to earlier revolutionary movements,

such as Communism. In the Middle East, ISIS is exploiting Sunni disenfranchisement. But in the West, where many of its recruits are converts, we can compare its seductive appeal to the anti-establishment youth movements of the 1960s and '70s, although its goals and the values it represents are of course quite different. Jihadis express their dissatisfaction with the status quo by making war, not love. They are seduced by Thanatos rather than Eros. They "love death as much as you [in the West] love life," in Osama bin Laden's famous and often-paraphrased words.

For Now, Western Recruits Represent the Most Significant Threat to the United States

Western recruits represent the principal threat to the United States, at least for now. ISIS would very much like to turn Western Muslims against their homelands, and for now, this has proven more easily accomplished in Europe than in the United States. One primary explanation may be that the pool of disenfranchised Muslim youth is larger in Europe. European Muslim youth describe themselves, often accurately, as victims of prejudice in the workplace and in society more generally. In the most recent *European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, one in three Muslim respondents reported experiencing discrimination, with the effect greatest among Muslims aged sixteen to twenty-four (overall discrimination rates decline with age). Muslims in Europe are far more likely to be unemployed and to receive lower pay for the same work than "native" Europeans. Consequently, Muslim immigrants in Europe are disproportionately impoverished. While ten percent of native Belgians live below the poverty line, that number is 59 percent for Turks and 56 percent for Moroccans in Belgium. There are 4.7 million Muslims living in France, many of them in poverty. An estimated 1,550 French citizens have left for Syria or Iraq; some 11,400 citizens have been identified as radical Islamists in French surveillance data.^{xvi}

By contrast, a majority of American Muslims are deeply integrated into American society. A 2011 Pew poll found that Muslim Americans feel happier with their lives than does the general population in the United States.^{xvii} That sentiment could change, however, with growing talk of imposing Nuremburg-style laws and requiring Muslims to register with the US government, a type of political speech that could actually facilitate ISIS's goals of alienating American Muslims. But even without the assistance of such speech, ISIS is working hard to attract

Americans. Refugee youth, whose parents imagine them to be most secure inside their homes and on-line, often don't recognize that the Internet is not necessarily a safe place for children. Training such parents about potential Internet dangers is important.

Which of its "Wants" will ISIS Pursue?

ISIS will continue to pursue its two goals simultaneously, though those objectives are clearly antithetical. To one end, ISIS will continue to recruit foreign citizens for the creation of its caliphate. And to the other, it will continue to recruit volunteers to conduct attacks in the West aimed at triggering the all-out ground attack and prophesied final battle. **We can expect that attacks in the West will grow more sophisticated and become more common. As an intermediate step, while ISIS exercises both of its antithetical options, the group will do its best to increase tensions between the "crusaders" and ordinary Muslims, to polarize Muslims against one another, and to incite internal divisions within the West.**

How to Study What ISIS Wants: Why We Need To Reconsider IRB Rules as Applied to Terrorism Studies

The subject of this hearing is important; the success of our war against ISIS depends in part on our having an accurate understanding of what ISIS wants and what it claims to offer the individuals it is trying to recruit. But we cannot learn why individuals choose to become terrorists (or how to dissuade them from doing so) from large-N studies, the kind of studies that are favored by the academy and represent the lion's share of studies funded by our government. If we want to understand individual motivations, there is no substitute for talking to individual terrorists or individuals who have demonstrated interest. But this kind of work is harder and harder to do, in part because IRB rules make it almost impossible for scholars to talk to extremists in the field, and even harder to interview terrorists who are incarcerated. The tension between US laws regarding disclosure and Institutional Review Boards at our universities make it impossible to ask important questions such as, "If you were recruited by ISIS, why would you join? If you would not join, why not?" For example, I am not allowed to speak with presumed ISIS members on line to ask them what they want without violating IRB rules mandated by US law. Nor may I ask individuals if they have joined a terrorist group without violating either US law or IRB regulations. The IRB Regulations were designed to protect individuals from

unscrupulous scientific researchers. Today, as applied to research on terrorism, these IRB rules are harming national security. While this is not the forum to review in detail the barriers to research on this question, I believe that this Committee could provide an immense service by highlighting this problem and developing a policy consensus and common sense approach to ensuring that IRB rules and government regulations designed for the protection of vulnerable populations do not hinder vital scholarly research on the motivations of terrorists.

How Should We Respond? Military Responses Are Necessary but Insufficient

Given enough political will and ground forces, the West can defeat the Islamic State in the territory it controls. This would require a massive military commitment, though the West certainly has the means. One problem, of course, is that many of the millions of people living under ISIS rule do not support ISIS and desperately wish to leave. These innocent people will, almost certainly, become collateral casualties and the West must grapple with this moral dilemma. In that regard, even attacks aimed at the ISIS economy prove problematic; many truckers smuggling oil out of ISIS-held territory are not ideologically motivated, but trying to feed their families.^{xviii} These are the types of people we would count on to rise up against the Islamic State given the opportunity. Still, many argue that, with the stakes so high, the right approach is the “merciless” war French President Francois Hollande called for in the wake of the 2015 Paris attacks.

But even this “merciless” approach is only a temporary fix. Defeating ISIS in Syria requires ending the civil war there and for our troops to remain in the region until Sunni safety is assured. Even if the United States and allied forces were prepared to occupy Iraq and Syria for the next thirty years—as General Powell once argued for with regard to the war in Iraq—there is no guarantee of success.^{xix} And ISIS has now spread into *wilayat* or provinces in some eight countries, where, there too, it capitalizes on poor governance.^{xx}

The United States and its allies can and should deploy more special-operations forces. We can and should get better at sharing intelligence among our allies, and we and our allies will have to reconsider the post-Snowden anti-surveillance mood. The “expeditionary force” announced recently by Defense Secretary Ashton Carter will provide an important enhancement to current

intelligence capacities.^{xxi} *There are compelling reasons to expand the number of ground forces in Iraq above the current 3,500 troops, but it would be far better if those forces were made up, not of “crusaders,” but Sunni Arabs.*^{xxii} But it’s necessary to be realistic about the impact of these efforts, which will not defeat the Salafi jihadist ideology that fuels ISIS and its expansive tendencies unless and until the international community finds a way to undermine its appeal.

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Importantly, *Salafi jihadists are not known to sit idle after their refuges are destroyed. They simply seek out new ones.* One example is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who founded the predecessor organization to ISIS. Zarqawi had been running an al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan when the United States invaded. He was wounded in a U.S. bombing raid, and fled to Iran, and from there to Iraq where he joined an organization that was fascinated by chemical weapons. Zarqawi would later try, unsuccessfully, to carry out a chemical attack in Jordan. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is now quoted on the cover of every issue of *Dabiq*, and is a kind of mascot for ISIS.

The most difficult task ahead is not containing ISIS militarily. Rather, it is to contain ISIS’s appeal among those who want to reinvent themselves as heroes in a global war against “infidels.”

How to Contain ISIS’s Psychological Operations

Individuals who escaped from ISIS-controlled territory told the *Washington Post* that the organization has recruited personnel, often from the West, with expertise in social media, sophisticated film-making, magazine layout, story-telling, etc.; and that the *individuals involved in ISIS’s psychological operations are paid more than its fighters. We need to respond in kind.*^{xxiii}

During the Cold War, psychological operations were a critically important part of the strategy to defeat the Soviet Union. In George Kennan’s 1946 “long telegram,” later published in *Foreign Affairs* as “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” Kennan described the difficulties faced by the Marxists in attempting to spread their revolutionary movement in Russia, and urged that the West should contain the Soviets rather than attempt to defeat them.^{xxiv} There, he wrote

[L]acking wide popular support for the choice of bloody revolution as a means of social betterment, these revolutionists found in Marxist theory a *highly convenient*

*rationalization of their own instinctive desires. It afforded **pseudo-scientific justification...for their yearning for power and revenge** and for their inclination to cut corners in the pursuit of it.*

If we exchange “Salafi jihadist theory” for “Marxist theory,” this description might equally apply to ISIS. Kennan argued that the establishment of dictatorial power becomes a necessity when the broader population does not share in the revolutionaries’ zeal. And it is for this reason, that ISIS has imposed dictatorial powers, as described by some who have managed to escape.^{xxv}

Kennan, the architect of containment, considered **psychological operations, or “political warfare,”** to be even more important than military operations in the effort to defeat the Soviet regime and its false promises. In 1948, he argued that

political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (as ERP), and "white" propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of "friendly" foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.^{xxvi}

In 1949, a group of prominent business leaders, attorneys and philanthropists came together with the government to launch the National Committee for Free Europe (NCFE) and the Office of Policy Coordination.^{xxvii} These programs would eventually give rise to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty as well as efforts to promote anti-Soviet intellectuals – with the goal of contesting the Communist regime’s false narrative and totalitarian rule.

Our containment effort against ISIS needs to be beefed up significantly: It could profitably be modeled on an updated version of Kennan’s notion of political warfare. Initiating it will require input from business leaders, attorneys, philanthropists, and the government, just as was the case for political-warfare operations against the Soviet Union. Students and teachers should be brought into the effort: The counter-narrative course that EdVenture Partners is offering, together

with the State Department and Facebook, needs to be expanded into high schools, so that younger students can participate in addressing ISIS's false appeal. The Saudi Ministry of Education has already expressed a strong interest in having EdVenture Partners expand P2P to include Saudi high school students.

An effective political warfare operation will require, in the words of Bernard Haykel, "engaging in cultural and educational efforts to defeat ISIS's ideology that sanctifies violence as the only means for Sunni empowerment and glory."^{xxviii} Western governments are not equipped to do this alone. He notes, "[i]t is an effort that must emerge from within the Arab and Muslim communities." Saudi Arabia, as the source of the "**untamed Wahhabism**" that underlies ISIS ideology, has an important role to play moving forward.^{xxix} Perhaps even more than we need their military support, we need the Arab states to lead the containment of ISIS ideology and to model alternative narratives.

ISIS is spreading **a bad - but still seductive -- idea** that has dispersed way beyond the borders of its caliphate, not only into areas of poor governance and weak states, but also into the West. We cannot deploy drones against an ideology, and we cannot deploy them against our ISIS-affiliated enemies in the West. Thus, countering ISIS's propaganda efforts is essential.

During World War 2, the American people expected to sacrifice to help achieve the war aims. During the continuing war on jihadi terrorism, only a relatively small number of people have volunteered to serve our nation. Containing ISIS requires a national (and international) effort. Entertainment, Internet, and media companies that know how to appeal to millennial audiences should play a much larger role in crafting and disseminating compelling counter-narratives, bringing to bear their considerable expertise in market research and messaging. Students all over the world should be brought into this effort.^{xxx} We need an army of individual volunteers who are willing and able to speak, credibly and persuasively, one-on-one, with youth who are attracted to "jihad-chic," long before they are drawn to violate the law. To this end, we should be deploying former terrorists—individuals who have abandoned jihadist organizations and can provide a more accurate picture of the jihadist way of life. They are uniquely equipped to explain that counter to ISIS's propaganda, there is nothing heroic about ISIS.

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- ⁱ Heidi Ellis et al., "Relation of Psychosocial Factors to Diverse Behaviors and Attitudes Among Somali Refugees," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 2015.
- ⁱⁱ John Cantlie, "Paradigm Shift Part II," *Dabiq* 12 (2015): 47-50. The next few pages are based on Jessica Stern, "What Does ISIS Really Want Now," *Lawfare Blog*, November 28, 2015.
- ⁱⁱⁱ John Cantlie, "Paradigm Shift Part II," *Dabiq* 12 (2015): 47-50.
- ^{iv} Pieter Vanostaeyen, "Abū Muhammad al-ʿAdnānī ash-Shāmī – Indeed Your Lord Is Ever Watchful," September 25, 2014, <https://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2014/09/25/abu-muhammad-al-adnani-ash-shami-indeed-your-lord-is-ever-watchful/>.
- ^v "The Extinction of the Grayzone," *Dabiq* 7 (February 2015): 54-66.
- ^{vi} Eric Schmitt, "Paris Attacks and Other Assaults Seen as Evidence of a Shift by ISIS," *The New York Times*, November 22, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/23/world/europe/paris-attacks-isis-threatens-west.html?ref=topics&r=1>.
- ^{vii} ISIS needs both capital and labor. Here I only discuss labor.
- ^{viii} Greg Miller and Souad Mekhennet, "Inside the Surreal World of the ISIS Propaganda Machine," *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/inside-the-islamic-states-propaganda-machine/2015/11/20/051e997a-8ce6-11e5-acff-673ae92ddd2b_story.html.
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- ^x Ibid.
- ^{xi} Isa Ibn Sa'd Al Ushan, "Advice to the Mujahidin: Listen and Obey," *Dabiq* 12 (2015): 9-10.
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- ^{xiii} Muhammad Faour, "The Importance of Education in the Arab World," Carnegie Middle East Center, December 1, 2011.
- ^{xiv} Carlos Leite and Jens Weidman, "Does Mother Nature Corrupt? Natural Resources, Corruption, and Economic Growth," *International Monetary Fund*, July 1999; Jeffrey D. Sachs and Andrew M. Warner, "Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth," Center for International Development and Harvard Institute for International Development, November 1997.
- ^{xv} Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).
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- ^{xvii} "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism," Pew Research Center, August 2011.
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- ^{xix} "An American General Explains How We Lost in Iraq and Afghanistan," *On Point with Tom Ashbrook*, National Public Radio, November 13, 2014, <http://onpoint.wbur.org/2014/11/13/lost-iraq-afghanistan-army-general>.
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- ^{xxiii} Greg Miller and Souad Mekhennet, "Inside the Surreal World of the ISIS Propaganda Machine," *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/inside-the-islamic-states-propaganda-machine/2015/11/20/051e997a-8ce6-11e5-acff-673ae92ddd2b_story.html.
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^{xxvii} “The National Committee for Free Europe, 1949,” Central Intelligence Agency, May 29, 2007, <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2007-featured-story-archive/a-look-back.html>.

^{xxviii} Bernard Haykel, “Paris Confirms IS’s Weakness,” *The Hindu*, November 19, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/paris-confirms-iss-weakness/article7892753.ece>.

^{xxix} David D. Kirkpatrick, “ISIS’ Harsh Brand of Islam Is Rooted in Austere Saudi Creed,” *The New York Times*, September 24, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/isis-abu-bakr-baghdadi-caliph-wahhabi.html>.

^{xxx} Google Ideas and Facebook are already investing in this effort. Facebook’s decision to invest in P2P should be acknowledged with a nod and a hug.



*Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding Its Goals and Ideology to Better
Protect the Homeland*

Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs

January 20, 2016

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Director, Program on Extremism
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Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege to speak in front of you today. Thank you for this opportunity.

Two characteristics define the current mobilization of Americans attracted to the Islamic State (also known as IS, ISIS, ISIL or Daesh): unprecedented size and astonishing diversity.

Small numbers of Americans joined jihadist causes already in the 1980s, when a handful traveled to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, a few mobilized to the battlefields of Bosnia and Chechnya. And since 9/11 hundreds of U.S. citizens and residents have, in various ways, been involved with al Qaeda, the Taliban, al Shabaab, Lashkar e Taiba, and several other groups. But the magnitude of the mobilization that IS has triggered among American Muslims is unprecedented.

Let me be clear: the overwhelming majority of American Muslims reject the Islamic State's narrative and tactics. Those few who embrace them comprise a statistically insignificant percentage of a peaceful and law-abiding community. Moreover, several American Muslim organizations have made laudable efforts to proactively challenge IS's message and reach inside this country. The IS-related mobilization is a matter of individuals, not entire communities, becoming radicalized. It would be incorrect and dangerous to think otherwise.

Yet, even though the IS-related mobilization in America is not symptomatic of any widespread radicalization within the country's Muslim communities, its size is large enough to pose an unprecedented problem to law enforcement. In fact, publicly available data confirm a sharp surge in jihadist activities in the U.S., especially when compared to the dynamics seen in the years since the wave of arrests following the 9/11 attacks.

Last July, the Director of National Intelligence estimated that more than 250 individuals from the U.S. had traveled or attempted to travel to conflict areas where jihadists operate, a few dozens had joined the ranks of IS, and some 20 had died.¹ Since the first IS-related arrest in March 2014, more than 80 individuals in one way or another linked to IS have been charged in the U.S. for terrorism-related activities, and 61 in 2015 alone.

The collective number of Americans who have been arrested or joined IS in Iraq and Syria represent just the tip of the iceberg of the phenomenon. Tellingly, in May 2015, FBI Director

¹ Barbara Starr, "A Few Dozen Americans in ISIS Ranks," *CNN*, July 15, 2015.

James Comey spoke of “hundreds, maybe thousands” of IS sympathizers and potential recruits across the country, disclosing that the Bureau had related investigations running in all 50 states.² A few months later, in October 2015, Comey revealed that the FBI had a staggering 900 active investigations against homegrown violent extremists.³ These numbers dwarf those of the al Qaeda-linked mobilization of the 2000s.

The second defining characteristic of the IS-related mobilization is the extremely heterogeneous background of those involved. Individuals charged with IS-related activities in the U.S. range from the son of a Boston police officer of Italian heritage to a battle-hardened Bosnian immigrant, from teenage girls in suburban Denver to U.S. military veterans in their 40s. Some radicalized rapidly and independently, often in front of a computer screen. For others, the radicalization process took place over a longer period of time and alongside other like-minded individuals. Some decided to travel abroad to join IS while others preferred to carry out attacks at home. In substance, there is no common profile or radicalization trajectory, no such thing as a “typical” American IS recruit or sympathizer.

These two aspects, large size and diversity, pose an enormous challenge to law enforcement agencies, tasked with detecting an unprecedented number of individuals with no common profile. Complicating the task further, most U.S.-based IS sympathizers possess no connections to international terrorist networks. The lack of communication with known overseas terrorists makes their detection even more challenging.

On a daily basis, authorities do identify individuals who, with varying degrees of intensity, sympathize with IS’s or, more generally, jihadist ideology. But there is no consistent indicator revealing who among the thousands of jihad enthusiasts will make the leap from “keyboard warrior,” espousing extremist but constitutionally protected views, to actual violence. Closely monitoring all of them is not only difficult from a legal point of view, but also unfeasible from a resource one.

The motivations

² Tom Vanden Brook, “ISIL Activity Drives up Pentagon Threat Level,” *USA Today*, May 8, 2015.

³ Kevin Johnson, “Comey: Feds have Roughly 900 Domestic Probes about Islamic State Operatives,” *USA Today*, October 23, 2015.

There is no easy explanation for this relative surge in radicalization. It is difficult, if not outright impossible, to enter the minds and hearts of the many Americans who have either chosen to join or merely sympathize with IS and understand what led them to embark on such a puzzling journey. What is clear, however, is that individuals with such diverse backgrounds are unlikely to be motivated by the same factors.

Law enforcement agencies and academics around the world have formulated a number of explanatory theories about the underlying factors driving people to radicalize. Some focus on structural factors such as political tensions and cultural cleavages, the so-called “root causes” of radicalization. Others underscore personal and psychological factors such as the aftershock of a life-changing event. But, in substance, most experts agree that radicalization is a highly complex and individualized process, often shaped by a poorly understood interaction of structural and personal factors.

One of the triggers, cynically exploited by the propaganda of IS and other jihadist groups, is a deep sense of empathy. Compassion appears to have played an important role in initially motivating the first wave young Americans who became interested and invested in the Syrian conflict. Many were outraged by the appalling violence Bashar al Assad’s regime used to suppress the Syrian rebellion and the subsequent inaction on the part of the international community. Pictures and videos capturing the aftermath of civilian massacres perpetrated by the regime, displayed widely in both social and mainstream media, rocked the consciences of many—from those with a preexisting strong Sunni identity to those who were not Muslim—and led some to take the first steps to militancy.

A major shift began as the anti-regime rebellion in Syria came to be increasingly dominated by militant groups. By the time IS formally declared its caliphate in June 2014, the motivations of recruits appeared to revolve more around fulfilling perceived religious obligations.

Unquestionably, the primary one is that of living in a perfect Islamic society under the world’s only authentic Islamic government, as its supporters believe the caliphate declared by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi to be.

The idea of *hijrah* (emigration) is central to this mindset. In classical Islam the word refers to the migration of the prophet Mohammed and his early followers from Mecca, where they were persecuted, to Medina, where they could live an Islamic life free from oppression. For years

Salafist clerics have debated whether pious Muslims should be living in the West, as their narrative argues that believers are subjected to the same oppression and moral decay the early followers of Islam suffered in pre-Islamic Mecca.

Many Salafists have therefore argued that *hijrah* is mandatory, as a good Muslim should not be living in a morally corrupt society governed by laws others than those of a strict interpretation of the *sharia*. Yet those who follow this fringe mindset have consistently debated what constitutes a valid alternative to life in the West. For many of those who embrace Salafist ideology, in fact, no contemporary state adopts a purely Islamic form of government and legal code. In substance, even countries like Saudi Arabia are not Islamic enough, making *hijrah* an impossible imperative to fulfill.

The Islamic State is the first jihadist group (arguably after the Taliban in Afghanistan until 2001) to have established the kind of utopian Islamic society that the global jihadist community has yearned for. Indeed, despite the attention it has received in the West, IS's main appeal is not so much in its slick social media campaign. It is, rather, in its territoriality. What matters is the message, the substance. How that message is delivered amplifies its reach but is not the core reason for the message's appeal. The appeal of IS's message is that it has created a viable state to serve as the destination for the contemporary Salafist *hijrah*.

American jihadists are as galvanized and attracted by the unparalleled territorial entity that IS's self-proclaimed caliphate represents as their counterparts worldwide. Whether in online conversations with like-minded individuals or in interrogations with authorities following their arrest, the draw of living in this utopian Islamic society is cited by the vast majority of American IS sympathizers. "Khilafah offers us to live under the laws Allah prescribed for us," tweeted Munther Omar Saleh, a 20-year-old university student from Queens who was arrested in June 2015 for planning attacks in New York City, "if we fear him we would rush to the land to be governed by it."⁴ He praised the caliphate as the "land of no music, and no perverts taking girls out to violate them, no intoxication, no Filth, period!"⁵

As is typical of an ideology that mixes politics and religion, the obligation to join and defend the caliphate spans both. Similarly, motivations professed by American jihadists often frame what

⁴ <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Saleh%20Criminal%20Complaint.pdf> (pp. 4-5)

⁵ <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Saadeh%20C%20A.%20Criminal%20Complaint.pdf> (p. 39)

could appear as religious factors in political terms and vice versa. Political grievances are seen through religious lenses. Similarly, their political solutions are framed as fulfillments of religious obligations.

The political grievances of American IS sympathizers run the gamut. Some are of global nature, ranging from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to various theaters where American forces are involved. But, interestingly, many American IS sympathizers are equally, if not more, interested in domestic events. The riots in Ferguson, Missouri, or the current debate about Islam in America are no less of interest to some U.S.-based IS sympathizers than the conflicts in Iraq or Afghanistan. They all represent, in the conspiratorial worldview they have adopted, proof of the evil nature of America and every other entity or idea IS opposes.

An example of this mindset is represented by Terrence J. McNeil, a 25-year-old from Akron, Ohio, who was arrested in November 2015 on federal charges of soliciting the murder of members of the U.S. military. McNeil harbored strong anti-American feelings and had written on Tumblr: “I’m native American, German, and black, the US has been killing my ancestors for awhile [sic].”⁶ He apparently found in IS the perfect channel for his hatred for his country. In fact, in another post he stated: “Before I embraced Islam, I supported the Mujahideen for my hatred of the US. Now I support the Mujahideen for my love of the Muslim ummah.”⁷

In substance, the various ideological motivations are deeply intertwined. Perfectly encapsulating this overlap is the letter Mohammed Hamzah Khan, a 19-year-old from the Chicago suburbs, left to his parents before leaving on a Syria-bound flight. The letter outlined Khan’s feelings of empathy and guilt about the massacres taking place in Syria (“Me living in comfort with my family while my other family are getting killed is plain selfish”). But Khan also argued that “an Islamic State has been established, and it is thus obligatory upon every able-bodied male and female to migrate.” He also expressed anti-American sentiments, concluding that he did not want to “live under a law in which I am afraid to speak my beliefs.”⁸ These sentiments were echoed

⁶ <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/mcneil%6201.pdf> (p. 14)

⁷ <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/mcneil%6201.pdf> (p. 15)

⁸ <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/teenage-jihad-inside-the-world-of-american-kids-seduced-by-isis-20150325?page=2>

by his younger brother (“This nation is openly against Islam and Muslims,” “Living in this land is *haram* [sinful],” “The evil of this country makes me sick.”).⁹

Mohammed Khan, his 17-year-old sister and 16-year-old brother were arrested in October 2014 for attempting to join IS. The case is interesting on many levels, but one particularly noteworthy aspect is the background of the three teenagers. Many US-based IS sympathizers, whether they were born into the faith or have converted to Islam (as about 40% of those arrested for IS-related activities are), possess a purely superficial understanding of Islam. This lack of even the most basic knowledge of the tenets of the faith is cunningly exploited by IS recruiters, who can peddle their simplistic interpretation of Islamic concepts without much resistance. But the Khan siblings had all memorized the Quran by an early age and attended exclusively Islamic schools in the Chicago area all their lives. The case proves that, also when it comes to knowledge of Islam, no one profile of an American IS sympathizer and no one radicalization trajectory exist.

Religious and political motivations are also impossible to separate from personal ones. The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) fittingly observed that those who embrace IS’s ideology tend to be “disenfranchised individuals seeking ideological, religious and personal fulfillment.”¹⁰ Indeed, a search for belonging, meaning, and/or identity appears to be a crucial motivator for many Americans (and other Westerners) who embrace IS’s ideology.

The case of Ariel Bradley personifies this misguided quest. Bradley was born in an underprivileged family in the Chattanooga suburb of Hixson (incidentally, the same suburb where the perpetrator of the July 2015 Chattanooga shooting Mohammad Abdulazeed lived). Bradley was homeschooled by her evangelical Christian mother until she rebelled and left home as a teenager. According to friends interviewed for her extensive profile in *BuzzFeed News*, Bradley spent the following years wandering, seemingly in search of something.¹¹

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Testimony of Nicholas J. Rasmussen, Director, National Counterterrorism Center, *Countering Violent Extremism: The Urgent Threat of Foreign Fighters and Homegrown Terror*, House Homeland Security Committee, February 11, 2015.

¹¹ Ellie Hall, “How One Young Woman Went From Fundamentalist Christian to ISIS Bride,” *Buzzfeed News*, July 20, 2015.

“She was definitely always looking for love,” said a former roommate “always looking for that sense of belonging.” Another friend recalled Bradley’s “clearly segmented life”: “When I first met her she was a Christian, and then she was a socialist, and then she was an atheist, and then a Muslim. As far as I could tell it was always in relation to whatever guy she was interested in, so if she meets a guy that’s an atheist then she’s an atheist, falls into that for a year. Then the guy leaves and she meets somebody new, and it starts all over again.... It seemed like whatever guy she was with, she would just crawl into his skin and kind of become him.”¹²

At one point Bradley fell in love with a Muslim patron of the pizza parlor where she used to work. To get close to him, she converted to Islam. While things never worked out with the original love interest, Bradley began frequenting Muslim marriage websites where, in August 2011, she met an Iraqi man living in Sweden. Shortly thereafter the two married and had a child. Likely under the influence of her husband, Bradley’s faith became increasingly conservative and militant. In early 2014 the couple left for Syria, where they have reportedly been living in IS-controlled territory. Bradley is active online, particularly on Twitter and Instagram, where she discusses her life and praises IS. In the immediate aftermath of the Chattanooga attacks, which killed five military personnel in her hometown, she tweeted: “*in sha Allah* [God willing] this will make the camps of *Emaan* [believers] and *Kuffr* [non-believers] known within Chattanooga.”¹³

It is tempting to caricature Bradley as a naïve girl with personal problems whose jihadist trajectory is the outcome of an unfortunate childhood. It is also easy to assume that her actions were driven by a quest for a romantic partner. But, even in the most extreme cases, multiple factors contribute to an individual’s decision. Her friend’s analysis highlights this dynamic: “Be it religion, be it a man, be it a marriage, be it a child, be it IS, Ariel was always looking for something to define herself, an identity to cling to.”¹⁴ Given her particular pattern of behavior, it is likely that Bradley might have accepted other extremist ideologies, if circumstances allowed, so long as they satiated her hunger for community, love, and identity.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Still, it is difficult to fully comprehend the complex mental processes that led Bradley, like other young Americans, to embark on such an extreme journey to IS's caliphate. What is apparent is that IS and its propaganda machine have been particularly adept at exploiting the emotions, needs, and weaknesses of young Americans, irrespective of their demographic backgrounds. A handful of IS-related cases have involved individuals who are particularly vulnerable, not just because of emotional issues, like Bradley, but because of personality disorders and mental health issues. But in many other cases the individuals who embraced IS's credo, or jihadist ideology more generally, suffered from no apparent disorder. Rather, they were simply individuals on a personal quest.

This search for meaning was perfectly encapsulated in the words of Moner Abu Salha, the 22-year-old Floridian who is the first American known to have died in a suicide mission in Syria on behalf not of IS but of Jabhat al Nusra (a competing group which, nonetheless, adopts an ideology that is virtually identical to IS's). "I lived in America," stated Abu Salha in a 2014 video released after his death. "I know how it is. You have all the fancy amusement parks and the restaurants and the food and all this crap and the cars. You think you're happy. You're not happy. You're never happy. I was never happy. I was always sad and depressed. Life sucked."¹⁵ In contrast, he described life fighting in Syria as "the best I've ever lived."

What is also noteworthy about Abu Salha's case is that he grew up in a gated community in South Florida, where his family owned a small chain of grocery stores. He, like most other American IS sympathizers, suffered from none of the socio-economic and integration issues that are often, and somewhat superficially, considered main causes of radicalization of many European Muslims. A subset of American IS sympathizers, such as some individuals who come from Minneapolis' Somali diaspora community, is indeed underprivileged (although the direct, causal link between that condition and radicalization is also questionable). But most are not, making the often-adopted "radicalization-is-caused-by-lack-of-integration" mantra highly debatable. The kind of societal integration missing in most cases is not socio-economic in nature but, rather, personal and/or emotional. When looking for explanations of radicalization processes

¹⁵ Mona El-Naggar and Quynhanh Do, "Video Released of U.S. Bomber in Syria," *New York Times*, July 31, 2014.

it is therefore arguable that psychological rather than sociological (which, to be sure, should not be totally dismissed) analyses are the most likely to cede answers.

Radicalizing in America

Before concluding, please allow me to highlight a few additional dynamics. The first has to do with the role of social media. Unquestionably IS's ability to directly and constantly reach Americans through social media has played a huge role in triggering this mobilization, whether it is in the initial stages of the radicalization process (introducing individuals to its message, reinforcing their views through propaganda and direct communication), or at the end of that trajectory (helping them mobilize to leave for Syria to join the group and/or inciting them to carry out attacks in America).

Yet, it would be incorrect to overemphasize the impact of social media by considering it the sole medium of radicalization and mobilization for American IS supporters. A close examination of the individuals charged for IS-related activities reveals a significantly more nuanced reality in which the importance of social media, while present in all cases, differs substantially from case to case.

Instances in which radicalization is confined to the virtual space, completely devoid of contact with like-minded individuals in the physical world, have become increasingly frequent. Yet, in many cases the role of the Internet is not as all-encompassing, but rather complementary to equally, if not more, important dynamics in the physical world. In these cases, individual IS sympathizers did not begin their radicalization trajectories alone in front of a computer screen, but rather via face-to-face interactions through preexisting social contacts who already embraced jihadist ideology. Over time, these individuals tend to form a cluster: a small informal group of like-minded individuals whose internal dynamics reinforce the beliefs of its members. Just as the virtual community of IS supporters acts as an echo chamber, these real-life connections reinforce and strengthen individual commitment to IS.

Individuals who belong to these informal clusters typically become consumers of jihadist propaganda on the Internet. While the online echo chamber undoubtedly contributes to the individual's and thus the cluster's radicalization, the one-on-one and group dynamics cultivated in the physical world sometimes play a greater role. In these scenarios, online and offline

dynamics complement one another, both contributing to and accelerating the cluster's members' radicalization.

These group dynamics are also common in several European countries, where informal clusters often form at the margins of radical mosques, Salafist organizations, or student groups, or simply through the interaction of like-minded acquaintances in the neighborhoods of many European cities and towns. This phenomenon is not very widespread in the U.S. but it does exist. In some cases (out of Minneapolis, New York City, and St. Louis, for example), in fact, we have witnessed the formation of small, informal groups of individuals that come together at the local level based on their common interest in jihadist activities. The group's members might come together for a number of reasons: because they had known each other before radicalizing, as the result of shared ethnic roots, through the Internet, or by frequenting mosques and events linked to very conservative yet not openly militant Islamist groups.

A final and crucial point I would like to make has to do with the role of ideology, a word I commend you for using in the title of this hearing. There has been a tendency to focus almost obsessively on IS. But the vast majority of individuals who seek to join IS, whether in America or elsewhere, do so because they are attracted by jihadist ideology in general, not IS specifically. They do seek to join IS because it is, at this point in time, the most successful of an array of groups that, while at times fighting among themselves, belong to the same ideological family.

At times we focus, almost obsessively, on dynamics among jihadist groups and in trying to determine whether one specific attack or perpetrator was linked to a given jihadist group. These are relevant dynamics with important operational consequences. But drawing such a clear distinction between, for example, al Qaeda and IS when it comes to grassroots appeal among American and, more generally, Western aspiring jihadists seems to somewhat miss the point. Most aspiring jihadists want to fight jihad and care little about whether they do so with al Qaeda, the Islamic State, al Shabaab, or any other group within the global jihadist community. In many cases, they join one of these groups not so much because they have a clear preference for one over the others (even though it is undeniable that IS is the "trendiest" these days), but rather because of chance encounters and logistical circumstances.

From an operational perspective, determining whether the attackers in Chattanooga or San Bernardino were linked to al Qaeda, IS, or any other group is crucially important. But once it

was established that neither attack had any kind of operational link to abroad, determining whether the perpetrators' inspiration came from one group to the other is not only close to impossible but also moot. What motivated them is the same poisonous ideology and that is precisely what we should focus on fighting.

Thank you very much for your attention and I look forward to answering your questions.

Understanding ISIS in order to Better Protect the Homeland

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Testimony submitted to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on January 20, 2016

Chairman Ron Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas Carper and members of the Committee, thank you for the honor of testifying here today on such a serious and important issue. I have been in the field of building community resilience to violent extremism for over twenty years now and the process of radicalization and recruitment has dramatically changed in that time. Though the US government and our allies have spent millions of dollars in research to determine what causes radicalization, there is still no such thing as a terrorist profile and no one single factor that can predict who will become a terrorist.¹

What we do know from empirical research on convicted terrorists and terrorist incidents are some common indicators that exist in many of those cases, which may make an individual more vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization. We also learned that approximately 40% of those arrested for ISIS related crimes in the US were committed by Muslim converts² - that means the perpetrator grew up in a house that did not practice Islam. This tells us that no family is immune from the radicalization threat and therefore, the solution lies in a holistic approach. Furthermore, lone wolf terrorism is an increasing trend, given that 74% of terrorist attacks in the U.S. over the past six years were conducted by lone wolves.³

However, just because we cannot predict who will become a terrorist, it does not mean we cannot or should not do anything or that anything we do, cannot be measured.

In fact, we can design programs, clearly articulating a theory of change that connects program activities with the potential risk factors⁴ we are trying to ameliorate. Then we can measure, using traditional and innovative evaluation tools, whether we reduced those vulnerabilities in the program participants.

¹ John Horgan, "Individual Disengagement: A Psychological Analysis," In T. Bjorjo & J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind* (pp. 17-28). New York, NY: Routledge; and John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, Routledge, New York, 2014, page 87.

² Lorenzo Vidino, Seamus Hughes, "ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa", *Program on Extremism*, George Washington University, December 2015

³ "Lone Wolf Report," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, February 11, 2015. <https://www.splccenter.org/20150212/lone-wolf-report>.

⁴ Since there are no studies to date that have demonstrated a causal link between any one risk factor or combination of factors, and an individual becoming a terrorist, our use of the term 'risk factor' is colloquial and not predictive of who will become radicalized.

At WORDE, that is exactly what we did to create, adapt, and evaluate the efficacy of our community-led program known as the Montgomery County Model. I am pleased to say after two years of rigorous scientific evaluation, it is now the *only* evidence-based Countering Violent Extremism [CVE] program in the country.

Utilizing a “cluster model” approach,⁵ WORDE has identified five clusters of *potential* risk factors of radicalization. They include sociological motivators; psychological conditions; ideology/belief/and values; political grievances; and economic factors.

For example, a significant amount of social science research suggests a strong association between mental illness, social isolation, and lone wolf terrorism.⁶ In fact, 61% of lone wolf terrorists had previous health contact with mental health services.⁷

While there is no evidence to suggest terrorists have higher levels of *severe* mental illness than the general population, depressive and anxiety symptoms are more prevalent in those who sympathize with violent acts or terrorism.⁸

Social alienation, which often results from discrimination, marginalization or immigrant acculturation challenges, has also been identified as a leading factor for individuals to seek support from a social network that can provide a sense of belongingness or self-worth.⁹

Another factor that figured prominently amongst post 9/11 lone wolf terrorists, was about 76% broadcasted their intent, and often more than once.¹⁰ This tells us that family members or peers are the first ones who could intervene in the life of a vulnerable individual, *if* they were properly trained on the warning signs and encouraged to use help-seeking behaviors.

Finally, we learned that stigmatizing the Muslim community and having law enforcement lead all our interactions with that community was only exacerbating the lack of trust and cooperation.¹¹ It rarely led to more tips on potential threats and it provided a lot of negative propaganda for the recruiters who claim that the West was at war with Islam and Muslims.

Using this research-informed foundation for our programming, our objective was to decrease the social isolation of Muslim communities by joining them with numerous other community members—including faith leaders, county officials, social service providers, and educators—to promote social cohesion and public safety. It is important to note that the scope of our collaboration is not just limited to terrorism. We focus on Internet safety, treating the mentally ill, and preparing for disasters—a whole range of public safety threats including building

⁵ “Assessment: A Model for Understanding the Motivations of Homegrown Violent Extremists,” *Department of Homeland Security*, December 16, 2011.

⁶ Emily Corner and Paul Gill, “A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism,” *Law and Human Behavior*, Vol.39, No. 1 (2015): 23-34.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Kamaldeep Bhui, Brian Everitt & Edgar Jones, “Might Depression, Psychosocial Adversity, and Limited Social Assets Explain Vulnerability to and Resistance Against Violent Radicalization?” in *PLOS ONE*, ed. Paul Davis & Kim Cragin, 2014.

⁹ Arie Kruglanski, Xiaoyan Chen, Mark Dechesne, Shira Fishman and Edward Orehek “Fully committed: Suicide Bombers’ Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance” *Political Psychology*, 2009, Volume 30, Issue 3, 331-357.

¹⁰ Mark Hamm and Ramon Spaaj, “Lone Wolf Terrorism in America: Using Knowledge of Radicalization Pathways to Forge Prevention Strategies,” February 2015 <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/248691.pdf>

¹¹ “The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Policing Strategies to Counter Violent Extremism.” *Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University*, January 2016

resilience against violent extremist recruitment. Our public and private partners are united by the shared mission of promoting the common good and preventing harm, which naturally includes preventing terrorism.

Our evaluations indicate that this model has great potential to revolutionize traditional methods of community policing by allowing the community to lead and by creating relationships of trust and respect amongst the diverse community stakeholders rather than separating them off into silos that breed further distrust and isolation.

This relationship amongst community members—across racial, ethnic, and sectarian lines is more critical now than ever. Domestic terror attacks are creating fault lines in our societies that will only lead to more violence, if they are not repaired. The separation of Muslims from non-Muslims feeds into the bifurcated worldview of the terrorists who say—it is us vs. them—the West against Islam. A comprehensive prevention agenda therefore must include programs that prevent that divide— so that there is only an “us” against the terrorists.

In response to the need for specialized individual interventions that address the psycho-social aspects of radicalization, we added an intervention component to provide counseling and direct services for those who may be at risk of radicalization or other anti-social behavior, before they choose a path of violence. Ours is the first of its kind in the US.

Although we have not found a way to prove a counterfactual-- that our services prevented someone from becoming a terrorist -- we can prove through pre and post clinical assessments that our clients have had a reduction in potential risk factors and an increase in protective factors.

Besides the focus on psycho-social needs of the clients, our team can also tackle the ideological risk factors by referring the individual to a mentor.

It used to be that becoming a violent extremist took years of religious indoctrination. The process was long because the Islam they preached was so foreign to mainstream interpretations of the faith that they had to undo what Muslims believed for centuries and because their call to suicide and killing of innocent civilians was, quite frankly, unappealing.

In the interim, US counter terrorism strategies were so effective that many of the radical preachers were pushed out of public spaces and forced to go into hiding. The ideologues who promoted violent Islamism also realized the years of religious indoctrination was inefficient and maybe they should pursue a different class of recruit.

Unfortunately, the civil war in Syria, the continued persecution of Sunnis in Iraq and upheavals across the Middle East, provided the perfect opportunity for violent extremists to reformulate their strategy. Constant depictions of torture and bombing of families in the region motivated young Muslims across the world to go and join the ‘humanitarian jihad’—to save the Muslims who were dying at the hands of brutal dictators. Many of them were not even radicalized until they reached the battlefield. They thought they were going to be heroes, not suicide bombers in the marketplace. *Heroism was infinitely easier to sell*, particularly for vulnerable individuals who sought a sense of purpose or who suffered from thrill-seeking complexes. Suddenly as if almost

overnight, the terrorists had discovered the holy grail of recruitment: encourage people to come and build, not to come and die. That message would appeal to young and old alike, Muslim and non-Muslim. Anyone who saw the global powers as corrupt and oppressive or that their societies rejected them for being “different” were welcomed in this new utopia of misfits.

As a result, taking someone off the path now requires more than just a Muslim preacher. The process should also include a culturally proficient, trained professional that can resolve the feelings of cultural homelessness, and help the individual find a sense of belonging and purpose in *our* society. It may also require psychiatric care and prescribing medication to deal with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or depression.

Therefore, our clinicians take the range of issues presented in each case and document them in their initial assessments. Scores on the assessment and the clinician’s observations govern what treatment modalities will be applied. After several individually tailored sessions, a second assessment is administered to measure the reduction in the initial factors presented; and, any increase in protective factors. That data is collated with case notes and clinical observations to determine whether the client has stabilized enough to be discharged or alternatively, has demonstrated the need for more chronic, long-term care and is referred to the relevant providers. Using both innovative and traditional assessment tools, we can measure outcomes and efficacy of the treatment provided.

Since our program is a clinical model and follows the protected health information guidelines of professionals, our client information is kept entirely outside the purview of law enforcement unless an individual is an “imminent threat” or a “threat to national security,” which requires us to report the case to law enforcement. We have no formal legal guidance on what constitutes a national security threat and we do not know what would happen to those individuals we report. We also have not received referrals of already radicalized cases from law enforcement directly. However, in other parts of the country, such programs are being initiated by law enforcement; or, there are *no* intervention or prevention programs at all. Simply put, there is no consistency in the process and no federal guidance on what should happen and when.

I can tell you from experience actually running an intervention program, practitioners will need guidelines on what behaviors would trigger their duty to warn law enforcement, *if* we want to encourage more organizations to be active in this space.

The government has created numerous violence prevention programs and alternatives to prison sentencing for other sorts of crimes; there is no reason why we cannot establish guidelines for violent extremist cases as well. It is impractical to think we can arrest our way out of this problem. With thousands of individuals across the country that could be vulnerable to radicalization; it is irresponsible of us not to create alternatives.

Running an intervention program can be risky, expensive and complicated, but that should not discourage us from finding the right solutions. There needs to be more focus placed on developing legal guidelines for practitioners, including how we balance the privacy rights of clients with our national security interests.

Most importantly, communities need resources to create multi-disciplinary, community-based prevention programs that can operate independently of law enforcement; *as well as* diversion

programs that can actually treat radicalized individuals in a way that is governed by the laws of informed consent and monitored by federal or local law enforcement agencies. One source of funding could be DHS' Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), which enhances regional capabilities to prevent, protect, and mitigate terrorist attacks, major disasters and other emergencies.

Though many federal agencies play an important role in protecting the homeland, as long as the FBI has jurisdiction over terrorism investigation cases and is the lead domestic counter terrorism agency in the US, treating radicalized cases will require their participation. I do hope they explore such partnerships with communities, local police, social service providers and others who are interested in setting up diversion programs in a way that is transparent, collaborative and effective. I am encouraged to hear the interagency CVE Task Force, under the leadership of DHS, includes the FBI and the Department of Justice so these issues can be addressed in a coordinated effort.

Finally, no prevention program would be complete without also confronting the online threat. Many young people are either unaware or ignore the long-term consequences of inappropriate uses of social media and exposure to Internet predators. They post personal information about themselves, communicate with complete strangers and run the risk of being recruited by an Internet predator—whether that's a pedophile or a terrorist. This is a systemic problem across the country and really requires national and local campaigns to promote cyber-civility and security amongst youth and their parents.

With funding from a local youth media fund, WORDE created a cyber-civility curriculum that teaches kids about responsible cyber security and builds awareness about avoiding predators online. We provide a similar training for parents so they can learn how to monitor their children's use of the Internet and be the first line of defense against radicalization or recruitment. It is totally unacceptable to hear from parents, "I had no idea what my child was doing online."

These are just some examples of what a prevention / intervention program can do and I cannot stress enough how important it is to have a variety of non-law enforcement "off-ramps" in the portfolio of activities.

Preventing violent extremism through engagement, education, and specialized interventions is a departure for traditional law enforcement and will require all the stakeholders to undergo a paradigm shift that emphasizes trust, collaboration and multidisciplinary strategies. It also requires--that while the law enforcement community has an important role to play, it should ultimately play a supporting role to communities and other governmental organizations that are better suited to operate in the pre-criminal space.

In conclusion, through generous funding of the Department of Justice, we are developing training manuals and teaching modules to help other communities adapt our evidence-based model for their unique needs. We have begun replicating the program for neighboring Prince George's County and look forward to training other jurisdictions as well.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Bernard Haykel
From Senator Ron Johnson**

**“Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding its Goals and Ideology to Better Protect
the Homeland”**

January 20, 2016

1. How does ISIS’s territorial control affect ISIS followers’ understanding of their religious obligations and likelihood to take violent action?

ISIS’s territorial control vindicates the idea that it is a state and this is central to the notion that Muslims are duty bound to recognize it as the only legitimate Islamic state on earth—the so-called caliphate, which is a unitary imperial state headed by a Caliph, who is regarded as the successor of the Prophet Muhammad in rule over Muslims. Another obligation posited by ISIS is that Muslims are religiously obligated, if they can, to emigrate to ISIS territory where they can lead the only meaningful and proper life as believing Muslims. In other words, as long as ISIS controls territory, it will continue to beckon Muslims to join its cause by physically moving there. ISIS’s loss of territory, which has taken place over the last year in both Syria and Iraq but unfortunately not in Libya, means that its claim to being a victorious cause backed by God will wear thin. As a consequence of this territorial loss, some Muslims, who might be attracted to ISIS’s cause, will begin to see it as yet another losing side—one among many movements that have sought since European colonialism in the early 19th century to reverse the military fortunes of Muslims by appealing to the duty for jihad (armed struggle). As such, military defeat of ISIS and its loss of territory is important to make ISIS’s propaganda ring hollow and to establish its as yet another losing cause not worth joining. But as this happens (i.e. loss of territory and military defeat)--and unfortunately, as we’ve seen from the tragic terrorist attack in Paris on November 13, 2015--ISIS will seek to lash out in desperation by resorting to terror attacks in the West and elsewhere. This is ISIS taking a page from Al Qaeda’s play book—namely, to resort to terrorism in order to remain relevant to recruits, to remain in the news and to maintain its claim that it is the only standard bearer of the Muslim cause against infidel enemies. This means that ISIS will seek to organize more attacks outside its territory and even further encourage lone wolf attacks, as it has done continually, for those who share its cause but cannot emigrate to its territory. It bears keeping in mind, however, that the number of people who are openly in favor of ISIS’s cause and attracted to its propaganda remains quite small in numerical terms. This is not a mass movement but rather a small group of people, who nonetheless can inflict terrible carnage through terrorism.

2. How would you quantify the threat to United States Homeland Security from Salafi-Jihadism?

- What is the percentage of the broader Muslim population that has radicalized to Salafi-Jihadism?

There are no specific figures that I know of on the number of people who have been radicalized and I don't believe anyone actually knows the exact number. I have heard estimates of fighters who are Salafi-Jihadi run from 20,000 to 100,000 individuals. The number of sympathizers, as opposed to actual fighters, is not known, not least because it is dangerous to express such views in public in most countries. My own speculation is that this number is very low among the broader population of Muslims around the globe. Perhaps several hundred thousand out of a population of 1.5 billion, but, again, this is pure speculation on my part. In addition, one has to disaggregate the nature of the attraction that some Muslims may have for the Salafi-Jihadis and their ideology. So, for example, it is possible that some people who are not Salafi-Jihadi by orientation nonetheless approve of the fight that ISIS is waging against Shiites because they perceive the Shiites to be the true enemies. However, such sympathizers with ISIS would never wish to be ruled directly by ISIS. The nature of the attraction that some might feel for ISIS or even for Al Qaeda is not straightforward, but rather determined by context and therefore is always fluctuating or dynamic and as such never easy to establish with certainty.

- What is the approximate total number of radicalized Salafi-Jihadists?

See answer above.

- If your expertise on Salafi-Jihadism does not qualify you to answer, what is a qualified source for this information?

See answer above. I don't believe any person or entity has an exact answer to this question, and I would caution against believing any clear-cut numbers, because there are sides with agendas who may wish to inflate or deflate the nature and extent of this religio-political phenomenon.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Jessica Stern
From Senator Ron Johnson**

“Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding its Goals and Ideology to Better Protect the Homeland”

January 20, 2016

1. How does ISIS’s territorial control affect ISIS followers’ understanding of their religious obligations and likelihood to take violent action?

In June 2014, Abu Bakr-al Baghdadi announced that he was reestablishing the caliphate and that all Muslims, anywhere on earth, were required to relocate to ISIS-held territory. But this edict was soon supplemented by Mohammed al-Adnani, Baghdadi’s official spokesperson, who has repeatedly urged Muslims to carry out a jihad wherever they are living. One of the goals of attacking the West, ISIS says, is to eliminate the “grayzone” of moderate Islam and to make Muslims feel unsafe and presumably more vulnerable to ISIS recruitment. Another stated goal is to goad the West into sending in ground forces. ISIS also has “provinces” in Libya, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, Northern Nigeria, and the North Caucasus.

What does this imply about our counter-ISIS policy? The West can defeat the Islamic State in the territory it now controls in Iraq and Syria. But it would take a massive ground invasion, and the results would be temporary at best. The Islamic State of Iraq (the group formerly known as Al Qaeda in Iraq – and eventually known as ISIS) rose again after it was beaten back during the surge of U.S. forces into Iraq beginning in 2007 because Sunni Arabs felt disenfranchised and unsafe. As long as Sunni Arabs continue to feel unsafe in their homes, jihadi organizations will step in to “protect” them from harm. Unless and until a political solution is found for Syria, ISIS, or another jihadi group like it, will very likely rise again, just as happened after our temporarily successful “surge.” Thus, the more difficult part of any long-term policy involves finding a political solution for Syria and helping to improve governance. Weak states and poor governance make much of the Middle East and North Africa vulnerable to a variety of jihadi groups, among them ISIS and al Nusra. A crisis of governance throughout the region complicates our policy.

2. How would you quantify the threat to United States Homeland Security from Salafi-Jihadism?
 - What is the percentage of the broader Muslim population that has radicalized to Salafi-Jihadism?
 - What is the approximate total number of radicalized Salafi-Jihadists?

- If your expertise on terrorism does not qualify you to answer, what is a qualified source for this information?

In general, I believe that jihadists pose the most grave threat to the Middle East and nearby states, secondarily to Europe. The United States is least vulnerable. The threat to the US appears to be primarily from self-radicalized individuals and groups. It is very hard to quantify the threat, in part because so many of the individuals arrested in connection with jihadi crimes in the United States are converts. As for how many Salafi jihadists there are in the world, I am not the right person to address this question. Seth Jones wrote in a 2014 RAND report that in 2013, 49 Salafi-jihadist groups existed -- a 58 percent increase from the number in 2010. He went on to report that in 2013, there were between 40,000 and 100,000 Salafi-jihadists worldwide, more than half of whom were located in Syria.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Lorenzo Vidino
From Senator Ron Johnson**

“Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding its Goals and Ideology to Better Protect the Homeland”

January 20, 2016

1. How does ISIS’s territorial control affect ISIS followers’ understanding of their religious obligations and likelihood to take violent action?

Response:

ISIS requires territory to pursue its aim of establishing an Islamic state. After seizing territory, ISIS declared a caliphate, led by self-proclaimed caliph Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. For ISIS, the declaration of the caliphate is a call for absolute allegiance from the *ummah* (the global community of Muslims). In a paper discussing ISIS’s ideology, Cole Bunzel translates Baghdadi’s call to action, which states: “O Muslims in all places. Who is able to emigrate to the Islamic State, let him emigrate. For emigration to the Abode of Islam is obligatory.”¹ ISIS’s ideology intertwines territorial control with religious obligation. By seizing land and declaring a caliphate, to which Muslims are theoretically obligated to support, ISIS projects power in a way that legitimizes the movement and encourages supporters to take violent action.

American jihadists are as galvanized and attracted by the unparalleled territorial entity that ISIS’s self-proclaimed caliphate represents as their counterparts worldwide. Whether in online conversations with like-minded individuals or in interrogations with authorities following their arrest, the draw of living in this utopian Islamic society is cited by the vast majority of American ISIS sympathizers. “Khilafah offers us to live under the laws Allah prescribed for us,” tweeted Munther Omar Saleh, a 20-year-old university student from Queens who was arrested in June 2015 for planning attacks in New York City, “if we fear him we would rush to the land to be governed by it.”² He praised the caliphate as the “land of no music, and no perverts taking girls out to violate them, no intoxication, no Filth, period!”³ As is typical of an ideology that mixes politics and religion, the obligation to join and defend the caliphate spans both.

2. How would you quantify the threat to United States Homeland Security from Salafi-Jihadism?

¹ Bunzel, Cole (2015). From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State. *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*. translation of Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, “Risāla ilā ’l-mujāhidīn wa’l-umma al-Islamiyya fī shahr Ramaān,” Mu’assasat al-Furqān, 1 July 2014. Transcript: https://archive.org/download/K_R_abubkr/et34.pdf.

² <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Saleh%20Criminal%20Complaint.pdf> (pp. 4-5)

³ <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Saadch%2C%20A.%20Criminal%20Complaint.pdf> (p. 39)

- What is the percentage of the broader Muslim population that has radicalized to Salafi-Jihadism?
- What is the approximate total number of radicalized Salafi-Jihadists?
- If your expertise on terrorism does not qualify you to answer, what is a qualified source for this information?

Response:

It is remarkably difficult to quantify the threat posed by the ideology to the US. The number of individuals espousing it is arguably identifiable in the lower thousands (tellingly the FBI has spoken of over a thousand investigations against IS sympathizers in all 50 states and a few thousands individuals potentially attracted to its ideology). Only a few of these individuals will make the leap from espousing radical views to actually carrying out attacks. Yet, as recent events have shown, some do.

The threat in the US is significantly more limited and contained than in most other Western countries due to a combination of factors (more aggressive policing; better integration of local Muslim communities; more limited presence of radicalizing agents/organizations). Yet the phenomenon, while still contained, seems to be on the rise.

It is nonetheless impossible for me to exactly quantify it.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Hedieh Mirahmadi
From Senator Ron Johnson**

“Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding its Goals and Ideology to Better Protect the Homeland”

January 20, 2016

1. How does ISIS’s territorial control affect ISIS followers’ understanding of their religious obligations and likelihood to take violent action?

A fundamental maxim of traditional Islamic law is that the community of believers will never unite upon misguidance or incorrect beliefs. And the one who deviates from the consensus has cut his connection with Islam. Therefore, when the consensus of scholars [*Ijma* as it is known in Arabic] determines certain Islamic commandments are no longer applicable to a modern period, then that commandment or action is nullified and no longer obligatory or no longer permissible. Islamic scholars have done this for centuries with issues like abolishing slavery, and creating the modern nation state after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. This is the way mainstream Islam is practiced and understood throughout the world, for millions of people. Contrary to this spirit of open-mindedness, modernization, and plurality of thought, there has arisen a school of thought that does not accept traditional interpretations of Islamic law and demands a very rigid and literalistic interpretation of original texts. Ironically, this practice is itself a “re-interpretation” since it is being done centuries after the original text was revealed. Yet Salafi’s unreasonably insist on the objectivity of their “interpretation”. In its most extreme application, the Wahhabi-Salafi ideology even takes verses of the Holy Quran that describe a certain battle during the time of the Prophet Mohammed as a rule of general applicability. As one can imagine, this oversimplification of religious understanding and scriptural reasoning is a perversion that can be quite dangerous.

In the case of ISIS, their claim to legitimacy stems in part from a saying of the Prophet Mohammed that reads:

Prophethood will remain with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain, then Allah will raise it up whenever He wills to raise it up. Afterwards, there will be a Caliphate that follows the guidance of Prophethood remaining with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, He will raise it up whenever He wills to raise it up. Afterwards, there will be a reign of violently oppressive rule and it will remain with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, there will be a reign of tyrannical rule and it will remain for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, Allah will raise it up whenever He wills to raise it up. Then, there will be a Caliphate that follows the guidance of Prophethood¹.

¹ Narrated by Ahmad, Al-Baihaqi, At-Tabri and Al-Albani, *As-Silsilah As-Sahihah*, vol. 1, no. 5

Bagdadi claims to be the Caliphate as foretold by the Prophet Mohammed in this saying. By doing so, he believes ISIS can mobilize other extreme Wahhabi believers or those too ignorant to know the difference, to support its “state” and to usher in the messianic era. Despite the fact that dozens of Sunni scholars have debunked Bagdadi’s claim to be a Caliph, and even many Salafi scholars do not accept his claim, delusions of grandeur and heroism still draw the vulnerable towards his misfit utopia.

For the Wahhabi-Jihadists like ISIS, another reason their territorial control increases their ability to recruit followers is because as a de facto state actor, they can declare a defensive-combative Jihad².

Under some interpretations of Sunni Islamic law, defensive-combative Jihad can be declared by a state actor, similar to the Just War Theory in the West, under the following limited circumstances:

- It can only be legitimized by the state, and cannot be undertaken by non-state actors. In other words, a community leader or a religious scholar cannot unilaterally declare jihad. Only a legitimate Muslim ruler of a state can declare it.
- Jihad can only be declared when no other means for peace will work and there is a possibility of success. It must also be reasonably proven that there is a: a) denial of religious freedom/aggressive actions against Muslims because of their faith, b) concerted efforts to eject Muslims from their legally acquired property, c) military campaign to eradicate Muslims, or d) oppression and injustice
- Combat can only be a means to achieve an end. It cannot be the end/goal in and of itself.
- Furthermore, jihad cannot sanction indiscriminate killing of civilians, let alone harming of women and children, nor can it involve the destruction of resources, places of worship, harming the environment, etc...

For some Sunni scholars, if a state actor declares a defensive-combative Jihad, and requests help from other Muslims outside his territory then it becomes incumbent on the outside Muslims to help until the matter is resolved. As you can imagine, the fact that ISIS controls territory makes their claim to declare Jihad against Syria and Iraq seem more legitimate since they claim to be a state actor and because the conditions of oppression, brutality and injustice have also been met in the case of Assad and the Iraqi treatment of the Sunni’s.

For other Salafi-Jihadists who have not ceded to ISIS, they argue that ISIS is not the Caliphate because it did not meet the conditions as set forth by the Prophet, which include: gaining the allegiance of those that “bind and loosen” i.e. the respected authority of the region AND have power/sovereignty over *all* the land of Muslims. However, many of them have pledged allegiance simply because they believe ISIS is a valid state actor, working towards becoming the Caliphate.

² This form of Jihad should be distinguished from the common interpretation of Jihad that means “to struggle”.

Most importantly, for mainstream Muslims that constitute over 1 billion people, ISIS is neither a valid state actor, nor do they believe the Caliphate will be recreated by world politics. For some Sunni and Shiite sects, there is a concept of the Last Days but the only leader [the Mehdi as he is called] during that time will accompany the second coming of Jesus Christ, ushered in by Divine will. In other words, it's a heavenly, spiritual concept, not something that is brought about by war and some deranged person declaring himself as such.

Though some academics and commentators say what ISIS believes is in Islam—such as a caliphate, the practice of slavery, and brutal battles of war—what they fail to point out is those principles have long been abandoned and nullified by the consensus of Islamic scholars and mainstream Muslims for centuries through the process of consensus [Ijma] I described earlier. So though ISIS may call themselves Islamic, the religion they practice is not what mainstream Muslims the world over consider to be Islam today.

2. How would you quantify the threat to United States Homeland Security from Salafi-Jihadism?

- What is the percentage of the broader Muslim population that has radicalized to Salafi-Jihadism?
- What is the approximate total number of radicalized Salafi-Jihadists?
- If your expertise does not qualify you to answer, what is a qualified source for this information?

I do not believe there is any realistic way to quantify that threat since the distinction between a Salafi and a Salafi-Jihadist is very difficult to make and I do not necessarily think anyone else is qualified to answer that question. Both believe their puritanical, intolerant interpretation of Islam that stifles individual thought, prohibits cultural and artistic expression, and refuses to accept other more pluralistic interpretations of the faith must be imposed on all Muslims, as well as eventually governing the rest of humanity. The only real difference between the two is more procedural and tactical than anything else. In other words, Salafi-Jihadists believe that violence is justified to bring about this social or political change while the others believe the process must be gradual, using non-violent means.